

English Expression

A Study in
Curriculum Building



By Ivan Johansen

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ENGLISH EXPRESSION

A STUDY IN CURRICULUM-BUILDING

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A SUGGESTED TECHNIQUE FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION OF AN ENGLISH
COMPOSITION CURRICULUM

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PREFACE

The purpose of this volume is to lay the ground work for an English composition curriculum which will reach the actual expressional needs of the students as fully and as effectively as possible. In other words, the study seeks to apply the educational doctrine of pupil need to the problem of curriculum construction in the field of English expression.

The principal steps by which it proceeds are: (1) the determination of general expressional needs through a study of the expressional activities characteristic of social experience, (2) an inquiry relative to the functional content of textbooks¹ in order to discover the extent to which current texts may be expected to furnish definite materials for instruction in the expressional activities of life, and (3) an illustration of the use of activity analysis in determining the nature of the subject-matter which should be taught. These three steps involve three types of analysis: (1) conduct analysis (i. e., the analysis of general experience into its particular constituent activities), (2) content analysis of textbooks, and (3) activity analysis (i. e., the analysis of a particular activity).

The results of these analyses furnish the general plan for the construction of an English composition curriculum and the results of additional analytical studies now in process will be used to refine and particularize the plan by determining details of content necessary to effective instruction in each of the expressional activities.

¹ The results of this inquiry into the nature of textbook content are reported in the Appendix.

Although the study was undertaken as a part of a general program for the reconstruction of the curriculum of training in Stephens Junior College, the author believes that it offers a sound basis for the development of a course in English composition for all non-specialized colleges and senior high schools. The list of activities reported in Chapter II have been checked against similar lists made by other groups (not connected with Stephens College) without in anyway changing the major classes of English expressional activities ("functional centers") reported in this study.

The author acknowledges his indebtedness to Dr. W. W. Charters—especially in connection with the study of letters as reported in Chapters V, VI, and VII. He also wishes to acknowledge his obligation to Dr. C. H. Judd, Dr. J. F. Bobbitt, and Dr. R. L. Lyman for valuable criticism and suggestions.

CHAPTER I

THE DOCTRINE OF NEED

The Doctrine Defined.—The doctrine of need in education as it relates to the course of study is the belief that human need, measured by individual and social standards, must be the ultimate justification of the school's curriculum. Individual standards and social standards may merge into one, but it is well to keep in mind the fact that while it is difficult to separate individual needs from social needs both terms are required to cover the legitimate fields of functional training. To the general individual and social needs are sometimes added the specialized vocational needs. But only in a limited sense can the criterion of need as applied to general training cover the specific vocational requirements of individual pupils. Only in so far as there is a *community* of vocational need can general education touch the vocational problem.¹ Therefore, in considering the demands of a course designed for the training of all the members of a particular group not vocationally homogeneous, specialized needs must be excluded.

Interest Not a Guide to Need.—The doctrine of need must not be confused with the doctrine of interest. While interest is undoubtedly a strong motivating factor, it is a hazardous guide to pupil need. The delimitation of school functions to the satisfaction of present needs in the light of present interests is a

¹ The specific attitudes and abilities which are suggested by Inglis (*Principles of Secondary Education*, page 370) as being rational economic-vocational objectives are those attitudes and abilities which are *equally desirable for all*, though the amount of training required may differ *according to the needs of special groups*.

view in favor of which obvious administrative arguments present themselves but against which the insistent social demand for preparation for adulthood stands as a protest.²

Social Needs and the School Curriculum.—Undoubtedly many of the responsibilities of adulthood are so easily understood that mastery of them is acquired through natural processes of social imitation. But many of the desirable abilities (and responsibilities) have acquired increased complexity through development generation by generation and must now find a place in the school curriculum if they are to be effectively exercised by the adults-to-be, the youth of the present generation, when the occasions of need arise.³

The Modern Domination of the Social Efficiency Aim.—The modern advocates of social efficiency as the aim of education must acknowledge the influence of Herbert Spencer and his insistence upon education "for complete living." But Spencer's consuming interest in pleading the cause of science as the "knowledge most worth while," an interest which apparently dominated the logic of his arguments and dictated a narrow and cramped application of his own principle, probably exercised a diminishing effect upon the influence which his impressive advocacy of the social-utility standard might otherwise have had on the curriculum field as a whole.

The expansive growth of educational opportunity, the insistence that higher education as well as elementary education be the privilege of all, has given increased emphasis to the functional

² Meriam says, "The curriculum should contribute primarily to enabling boys and girls to be efficient in what they are now doing, only secondarily to preparing them to be efficient later." (*Child Life and the Curriculum*, p. 137).

³ The functional viewpoint is well defined in Bobbitt's "What the Schools Teach and Might Teach" (pp. 15-20) in the *Educational Survey of Cleveland*.

view of training as defined in terms of social need. This view plays such a conspicuous part in modern educational thinking that one seldom has to look further than the most recent book or article on the principles or aims of school training to discover a re-presentation of the social-efficiency idea. Social efficiency has been a dominant theme in the literature of educational philosophy for many years. The following quotations indicate the trend of thought.

As early as 1899 we find Hanus writing:

. . . . Now, the material and spiritual interests of men change with advancing civilization; hence the primary social function of all education, and, in particular, of secondary education, is to adapt every individual to the civilization of his time. It is no wonder that contemporary thought should emphasize this function of modern education; the only wonder is that we have not emphasized it long ago.

—Hanus: *Educational Aims and Educational Values* (p. 79).

In the same year Dewey published "The School and Society." His chief plea was for the socializing of the school procedure, but the following statement implies his recognition of the problem of adapting the curriculum to practical social needs:

From the standpoint of the child, the great waste in the school comes from his inability to utilize the experience he gets outside the school in any complete and free way within the school itself; while, on the other hand, he is *unable to apply in daily life what he is learning in school*.

—Dewey: *The School and Society* (p. 85).

Excerpts from later discussions of educational principles show how the theory of social education has crystallized into a determinative standard for educational objectives:

. . . . I believe that ultimately we shall learn to state the purposes of all forms of secondary education in terms of the socially

useful to be achieved, rather than in terms of the mastery of so much subject-matter—in other words, that we shall learn to indicate clearly wherein any given mastery of subject-matter actually functions in personal or social power.

—Snedden: *Problems of Secondary Education* (p. 11).

. . . . We may naturally conclude that some sort of social end or aim should be at the basis of all educational endeavor. In earlier times this fact was only dimly appreciated, and, even to-day, it has scarcely descended from the realm of vague theory. The need however, of a thoroughly concrete, practical conception of the social end of education is thrusting itself upon us. Already many and diverse forces are grappling with the problem of giving our children a really adequate preparation for modern life. There is the greatest need that the serious student of education should think through the present situation, complex though it is, and baffling though its tendencies are, and attempt to evaluate what is being done and interpret it according to some unifying principles.

—Irving King: *Education for Social Efficiency* (p. 11).

. . . . The demand that our secondary schools shall reformulate their aims in terms of socially useful ends is becoming more urgent each year.

—Cubberley: *Editor's Introduction to Snedden's "Problems of Secondary Education"* (p. vii).

The key to any analysis of aims in education is to be found in an analysis of the *activities of life in which people do or should engage*. The aims of secondary education, therefore, as of any department of education, must be interpreted in terms of the activities in which individuals may be expected normally to participate.

—Inglis: *Principles of Secondary Education* (p. 367).

The Need of a Workable Technique.—The lack of particularization in these discussions is a striking fact. They enunciate principles and suggest problems but they stop short of the modes of solution. The need is for a workable technique and some actual demonstrations of its application. The two men who

have turned their attention most actively to the practical scientific solution of curriculum problems are Dr. J. F. Bobbitt and Dr. W. W. Charters. Bobbitt's work on the Los Angeles curriculum, Charters' special curricula for industrial training, and the research studies in process at Stephens College with a view to adapting the junior college curriculum to social and individual needs are illustrations of practical scientific techniques of curriculum building.

The Response of the School Subjects.—In general, the response of the "subjects," or "departments," to the doctrine of functionalized subject-matter has been somewhat superficial. On the one hand, there has been the introduction and popularization of new courses, such as "Business English" or "Business Arithmetic," and, on the other hand, there has been the appearance of claims of functional value in the traditional courses. The statement of such claims usually takes the form of an attempted justification of the course in terms of specialized vocational need, thus showing a narrow conception, or a complete misconception of the purposes of general training.

There are, however, instances of vigorous attack on the problem of practical course-revision. For example, Rugg and Clark's "Scientific Method in the Reconstruction of Ninth Grade Mathematics" has led to practical revisions of the course where the material evolved from the study has been introduced. Charters' diagnostic grammar study in Kansas City is the basis of a functionalized grammar course and has had a wide influence in reshaping the content of language instruction. In his book, "Curriculum Construction," Charters lists 56 investigations which he characterizes as attempts to develop "methods of attack" on the

curriculum problems of various fields.⁴ No doubt the results of these studies have found their way into the modification of certain curricula of particular schools. But, in general, the traditional subject-matter has withstood more than superficial innovation. Rugg and Clark point out that new texts in mathematics tend to "acquiesce to the demand for the introduction of more applied material" but to retain the conventional organization and divisions of subject-matter.⁵

Probably the most noticeable development in the curricular offerings of the different departments has been in the direction of *vocationalized* courses for special training rather than *functionalized* courses for general training. Often, with little or no internal modification, a series of courses is labeled "commercial," "engineering preparatory," etc., with the hope that some virtue in the name will satisfy a critical public and soothe an administrative conscience. Vocational values, being definite and more

⁴ The following table shows the distribution of the investigations among the various subjects:

Language and grammar.....	14
Spelling	8
Arithmetic	8
Vocations	6
History	5
Geography	4
Civics and Social Studies.....	2
Manual arts	1
Vocabulary	1
Reading	1
Physical education	1
Banking	1
Women's education	1
Interviewing	1
Education	1
Technical	1

Total

56

⁵ Rugg and Clark: *Scientific Method in the Reconstruction of Ninth Grade Mathematics*. Page 130.

easily objectified, naturally make first bid for recognition. Even special investigators seem to turn to the subjects of definite content as their fields of labor rather than to such subjects as the social studies which look toward the development of those abilities or virtues necessary to the complete fulfilment of community responsibilities.⁶

The response of the school subjects is also spasmodic and impulsive. In the absence of a well-established technique of curriculum making, administrators have been borne on the tide of popular tendency to cloak their courses of study with a kind of external conformity to new educational demands. This condition re-emphasizes the need of the application of a scientific technique to the problem of curriculum making. In this connection Dr. C. H. Judd has said: "Rational reconstruction of the curriculum requires the determination of real needs and the development of methods of avoiding fluctuations of interest due to mere passing excitement."⁷

The Apathy of the College.—Since the immediate purpose of the present investigation is the revision of the English composition curriculum in junior college, the question of applying the standards of social need to the aims of college training may well be raised. As Bobbitt has pointed out, *all general training* (as distinguished from specialized training) must find its objectives in general needs. The academic college provides, or should provide, a continuation of general training; and the professional college provides, or should provide, specialized vocational training. Therefore, the academic college curriculum

⁶ More than half of the 56 investigations listed by Charters fall in the fields of grammar, spelling, and arithmetic.

⁷ Dr. C. H. Judd: *The Scientific Technique of Curriculum Making*. School and Society, Volume XV: 1.

should be subjected to the same searching social analysis as the secondary school curriculum. The elementary school, the high school, the college—all courses of training which precede actual specialization in vocational schools—are simply progressive steps in the development of human abilities useful in society.

But the academic college of to-day is much more deeply interested in *teaching subjects* than in developing human abilities. Its departments are organized with a view to training academic specialists; it does not see education as a part of life or life as an object of education; it is, in fact, not solicitous concerning its own aims; it has not attempted seriously to analyze the needs of men and women whom it accepts for instruction. Of all educational institutions the academic college is apparently the most unresponsive to the challenge of educational problems.⁸

When one thinks of the expansion of the college curriculum during the past century to include all fields of human knowledge; when one finds a virtually complete elective system at the University of Virginia as early as 1820; when one reads the announcement of King's College (in 1754) that students were to be taught "such useful knowledge as may render them creditable to their families and friends, ornaments to their country, and useful to the public weal in their generation;" when one reads that William Smith, first provost of Franklin's Academy, in 1756, was responsible for the "first independent effort in America to construct a logical curriculum and the first clear statement

⁸ In supporting this criticism against the college, Mr. Flexner (in "The American College: a Criticism") quotes Charles Francis Adams as saying, "There is no agreement, no united effort toward a given end [in college training]"; he also quotes former President Schurman of Cornell: "The college is without clear-cut notions of what a liberal education is and how it is to be secured." Mr. Flexner goes on to say: "Even in a fresh field, like the college education of women . . . we have escaped the embarrassment of freedom by devolving upon girls the education that has proved of doubtful fitness for boys."

of the modern aim of good and efficient citizenship;"⁹ one feels moved to palliate the charges of educational backwardness and indifference which have been made against the college.

It is true that the college has been forced to expand its curriculum. But that expansion has not been accompanied by the internal adaptation of individual subject-fields to life needs. It is true that liberalized and far-seeing programs were launched early in the history of the American college but they were soon supplanted by the conservative traditions; and the democratic doctrines of William Smith, set forth in "The General Idea of the College of Mirania," were being opposed by Harvard a century later.¹⁰ It is true that there are indications of coming change, signs of a professional educational interest developing within the college itself; but there are, as yet, comparatively few college teachers who approach their work of instruction as students of education as well as subject specialists. In the light of available evidence, one is forced to reaffirm the charges of apathy and conservatism.

The Functional Viewpoint and English Expression.—Since this study focuses on the needs to be met through the curriculum of English expression, it will be appropriate to examine the literature of aims in English teaching in order to discover to what extent general or particular social needs have been specified. The influence of the social viewpoint is felt in the literature of English *method* sooner than in the literature of English *objectives*. Socializing the class procedure created considerable enthusiasm in the ranks of English teachers—but the "socializing" operation often failed entirely to touch the subject-matter. It is apparent, however, in recent discussions that the criterion

⁹ See Foster: Administration of the College Curriculum. Pp. 14-25.

¹⁰ Foster: *op. cit.*, p. 25.

of social need is being invoked with increasing confidence as a means of evaluating the subject-matter of the course in composition. Not only have educational thinkers like Bobbitt, Charters, Inglis, and Snedden insisted upon a recognition of this standard of evaluation in English as in other fields of the curriculum, but among English specialists themselves there is a tendency to admit the doctrine of social need as one of the major determinants of the ideal composition curriculum.

One of the most progressive and thoughtful statements of the aims and content of English instruction beyond the elementary level is the report made by the National Joint Committee on "Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools."¹¹ In setting forth the viewpoint assumed by the committee the report states that, "There is pressing need to exclude from the English course irrelevant and comparatively unimportant material," and opines further that the course "should be organized with reference to basic personal and social needs." The subject-matter, therefore, the Committee believed, should consist largely of activities—not information. Some of the more obvious of these activities are specified in the body of the report under the section on objectives. The ability to write a good letter is given as one of the important objectives, since letter-writing is the form of written composition which will be used most frequently by the pupil. Two other significant abilities mentioned in the report are: the ability to organize one's ideas effectively and present them with dignity before a group, and the ability to engage in informal discussion without discourtesy or irrelevancy.

The report is an important step toward functionalizing the

¹¹ Report by the National Joint Committee on English Representing the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education of the National Education Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. U. S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 2, 1917.

composition curriculum. But it is only a step. The range of "personal and social needs" is not fully recognized; the list of practical English-using activities in which people "do or should engage" and for which the English course should afford training is longer than the report would indicate. Other abilities, such as "the ability to speak and write correctly, convincingly, and interestingly," are mentioned by the committee, but since specific expressional activities are not designated, they are not subject to parallel classification with such objectives as "the ability to write a good letter."

Not all specialists in the English field have been so hospitable to the idea of a functionalized curriculum as have the members of the National Committee. In English, as in other subjects, the specialists have, as a rule, been more conservative in their acceptance of important educational principles than those students of education who bring the entire scope of training into perspective. And actual practice has lagged behind the acceptance of theory.

NOTE: The most recent report on English objectives is contained in Chapter IX of the Fourth Yearbook of the Department of Superintendence (Washington, 1926). The outline there presented is clearly an expression of the functional viewpoint and is an indication that real progress is being made in the direction of an English curriculum designed to satisfy the actual expressional needs of pupils.

CHAPTER II

DISCOVERING THE FUNCTIONAL CENTERS

The Method Employed.—The listing of those activities in which people “do or should engage” and the effective performance of which demands the use of English, oral or written, is likely to be merely an arbitrary process unless some scientific method of social analysis is employed to guard effectually against the limitations of individual judgment. The method adopted in this study involved the analysis of individual social experience in 208 cases. Since the study was directed toward a revision of the Stephens College English curriculum and its adaptation to the needs of women, the cases selected were 104 young women of the freshman English classes in the college, and their mothers (or—in case the mother was not living—some other immediate relative).

The analysis may be described as introspectional and observational. The young women were asked to list carefully the activities in their own experience in the performance of which they needed to practice the art of English composition,¹ either oral or written. In order to make the problem clearer, it was pointed out that the two most obvious activities are: the writing of letters and conversing with one’s associates. The problem was then further defined by the statement that the list should include not only those activities which *had actually been performed* but also those which the individual *had been called upon to perform and would have performed if she had been capable*

¹ The term “composition” is used in this study to mean *active expression*. It does not include any of the various antecedent steps of preparation.

of doing so. Each of the young women compiled the list from her own experience (introspectional analysis) and supplemented it with similar activities from her mother's experience (observational analysis).²

The lists were not collected until nearly a month after the problem had been discussed and assigned. No attempt was made to prevent the comparison of lists and the exchange of suggestions. However, it was made clear, through repeated caution, that no suggestion obtained through class discussion, individual conversation, or comparison of lists should be utilized unless it represented an actual activity within the range of the personal experience covered by the respective lists.

In order to facilitate the analysis and make it as nearly complete as possible, all social conduct (using "social" in its most comprehensive sense) was divided into six fields: *social* (using "social" in its narrower meaning), *civic*, *business*, *domestic*, *religious*, and *leisure*. This division was not set up as a rigid scheme of classification with sharply defined categories. (It is apparent that many activities occur in more than one field of conduct.) The division was employed chiefly for the purpose of securing more complete results through a successive exploration of different areas of experience.³

² Activities confined strictly to formal classroom procedure were not included.

³ This classification, though not strictly scientific in its character, was used because it was believed to be simpler and much better adapted to an analysis of language expression than other classifications of experience which have been offered. Though the divisions were set up more or less arbitrarily, they cover approximately the same scope of conduct as Bobbitt's or Bonser's divisions—with the exception of activities pertaining to the maintenance of health. (See Bobbitt's "Curriculum Making in Los Angeles," page 7, and Bonser's "Elementary School Curriculum," Chapter V.) The division of health preservation is omitted, since the maintenance of physical fitness seems only remotely related to language expression.

The Individual Lists.—One hundred and four lists were submitted, representing an analysis of two hundred and eight cases. The majority of the lists were well prepared, indicating a clear conception of the problem and a conscientious response to the request for a careful analysis of experience in terms of the activities in question. Three representative lists are given: (1) a full list with activities reasonably well defined, (2) a medium list, and (3) a meagre list with less careful definition of activities. List number 1 is probably the best one which was received—best from the standpoint of completeness, pertinence, and definiteness.⁴

List Number 1

ENGLISH ACTIVITIES IN LIFE

SOCIAL—

1. Conversing in good English on topics of interest and general culture.
2. Writing letters.
3. Writing formal notes.
4. Writing reports of social happenings (either in letters or for local publication).
5. Planning and organizing an entertainment program.
6. Keeping a diary.

CIVIC (including interest in the political and educational conditions of the community)—

1. Expressing and discussing opinions in meetings.
2. Writing articles or reports of meetings for publication.
3. Introducing a speaker.
4. Organizing programs.
5. Looking up information at the library.
6. Making reports in committees or in club meetings.
7. Acting as secretary.

⁴ The wording of the list has been altered in a number of places in order to secure greater uniformity of structure. For example, "secretary's report" was changed to "acting as secretary;" "letters," to "writing letters;" etc. The gerundive form is also employed in the later lists.

BUSINESS—

1. Writing a business letter.
2. Giving clear explanation of a business proposition.
3. Writing telegrams that can be understood.

DOMESTIC—

1. "Setting an example" in the use of correct English at home.
2. Selecting good books for the home.
3. Telling a good story and "making up" a story (for the purpose of instructing and entertaining children).
4. Giving clear directions about work.
5. Keeping a diary or other memoranda.

RELIGIOUS—

1. Speaking before church organizations, in Bible classes, or in committees.
2. Acting as secretary.
3. Teaching children in Sunday School.

LEISURE—

1. Taking part in club work⁵ (e. g., the programs of literary clubs).
2. Writing letters.
3. Keeping a diary (e. g., a diary of travel).

The following list offers almost as many items as the preceding one, but it is considered less satisfactory because it omits at least two of the major types of activity which appear in the composite list.

List Number 2

ENGLISH ACTIVITIES IN LIFE

SOCIAL—

1. Engaging in conversation.
2. Carrying on social correspondence.
3. Entertaining.
4. Using the telephone.

⁵ Although specific definition of activities was requested, fifty-three of the students recorded the general item "club work" under the head of leisure without specifying any particular *expressional phase* of club work.

CIVIC—

1. Speaking before Civic Improvement Club.
2. Presiding at meeting of Civic Improvement Club.
3. Making a report to the club.

BUSINESS—

1. Writing a business letter.
2. Telephoning.
3. Keeping accounts.
4. Writing checks and receipts.

DOMESTIC—

1. Speaking good English at home (for the sake of the children).
2. Ordering groceries by telephone.
3. Engaging in table conversation.
4. Helping children with lessons.
5. Giving concise directions to helpers.
6. Keeping a household account.

RELIGIOUS—

1. Praying in public.
2. Making a talk in Sunday School and in young people's meetings.
3. Taking part in a missionary meeting.
4. Writing a notice for the newspaper concerning the church work.

LEISURE—

1. Keeping up personal correspondence.
2. Keeping a diary (at times).
3. Helping in club work.

The following list, which has been described as "meagre," came from a student of less than average dependability in the performance of her regular class duties. It probably represents a very superficial attempt to provide the desired information. Ten per cent of the lists were of this character.

List Number 3

ENGLISH ACTIVITIES IN LIFE

SOCIAL—

1. Writing letters.
2. Telephoning.

3. Making calls.

4. Conversing.

CIVIC—

1. Writing letters.

2. Conversing.

BUSINESS—

1. Writing business letters.

2. Conversing.

DOMESTIC—

1. Training children.

2. Conversing.

RELIGIOUS—

1. Teaching a Sunday School class.

2. Making a Sunday School talk.

3. Writing letters pertaining to religious work.

4. Conversing.

LEISURE—

1. Writing letters.

2. Reading aloud to the family.

3. Engaging in discussions.*

4. Conversing.

The Composite List.—The composite list (made from the individual lists) contained a number of activities only indirectly related to English expression and some which evidently involve specialized abilities required by a relatively small number of people and which are, therefore, not admissible as constituent elements of general training. For example, "taking dictation," which appeared on eight of the individual lists, is a specialized activity and is probably not pertinent because it does not involve constructive expression. In a few of the irrelevant items such as "organizing programs," "looking up information in the library," and "selecting good books for the home" one can read the suggestion of certain over-developed pedagogical practices

* Included in the composite list under "exchanging opinions."

in English composition: the organized class in which parliamentary procedure and executive manipulation have supplanted the real subject-matter of the course; the traditional long-theme assignment based entirely on library research; the easy tangential route into the discussions of literary merit.⁷

ACTIVITIES AS LISTED AND CLASSIFIED IN 104 INDIVIDUAL LISTS

SOCIAL—	<i>Frequency of mention</i>
Writing letters	104
Conversing	98
Writing invitations	72
Keeping a diary.....	43
Writing notes of acceptance (or regret).....	36
Meeting and introducing people.....	33
Reporting social happenings.....	32
Discussing matters in social committee or other group.....	30
Entertaining guests	26
Telephoning	25
Giving toasts	24
Taking part in entertainment program.....	24
Relating incidents, telling stories and jokes, etc.....	14
Acting as secretary of social club.....	13
Making a report before a club.....	11
Making social calls	7
Planning social programs	7
Writing telegrams	5
Running a social column.....	5
Writing an announcement.....	3
Gossiping	3
Making a treasurer's report (for social club).....	2
Acting as toastmistress	2
Introducing a speaker	2
Conducting a club meeting.....	2
Writing the menu for a banquet.....	1

⁷ It is not the intention of this statement to imply that club work, library work, and literary discussion may not find a helpful place in a course in composition. The criticism refers to the too-frequent practice of permitting subordinate matter which should be merely contributory to the accomplishment of definite expressional ends to assume a dominant position in the course.

*Frequency
of mention*

CIVIC—

Discussing plans, opinions, etc., in group meetings.....	28
Writing a letter.....	27
Making out reports (for civic organization).....	25
Giving talks before a group.....	22
Conversing	20
Making a motion (parliamentary procedure).....	15
Writing a petition or a resolution.....	15
Acting as secretary.....	13
Writing news notices or other articles.....	12
Conducting a meeting.....	10
Campaigning	10
Introducing a speaker.....	8
Doing secretarial work.....	8
Making announcements	6
Telephoning	6
Entertaining visiting speakers.....	2
Making treasurer's report (civic organization).....	2
Reading a paper before a civic organization.....	2
Making an after-dinner speech.....	2
Taking notes on speeches.....	2
Giving a toast	2
Acting as librarian.....	1
Teaching immigrants English.....	1
Looking up information in the library.....	1

BUSINESS—

Writing letters	88
Conversing on business matters.....	72
Writing telegrams	58
Keeping accounts	36
Telephoning	26
Making business reports.....	24
Making a sale or a purchase.....	23
Writing checks and receipts.....	23
Giving directions	21
Explaining business matters.....	16
Keeping business memoranda.....	12
Writing an advertisement or a notice.....	10
Doing secretarial work.....	8

	<i>Frequency of mention</i>
Writing an order.....	8
Taking dictation.....	8
Making appointments.....	7
Interviewing business men.....	4
Giving dictation.....	4
Acting as secretary.....	2
Making treasurer's report.....	2
Introducing a speaker.....	2
Writing a contract.....	2
Conducting a business meeting.....	1
DOMESTIC—	
Conversing with members of the family.....	68
Telling stories (to children or others).....	68
Setting an example for children in use of English.....	40
Giving directions (to children or servants).....	37
Telephoning orders.....	37
Keeping household accounts.....	28
Writing letters.....	26
Teaching children.....	22
Selecting books for home library.....	18
Engaging in family discussions ^a	17
Keeping memoranda.....	17
Reading aloud.....	16
Entertaining company.....	12
Keeping a diary.....	8
Writing a recipe.....	6
Making purchases.....	5
Writing an order.....	3
Writing excuses for children.....	2
Getting lessons.....	2
Writing checks.....	1
RELIGIOUS—	
Teaching a Sunday School class.....	57
Giving talks.....	50
Engaging in discussion in Sunday School class or other group.....	39

^a In two lists the term "family debate" was used.

*Frequency
of mention*

Praying	29
Acting as secretary	26
Conversing	17
Taking part in church entertainment	15
Telling Bible stories to children	14
Making report of a church committee	13
Making reports to missionary society (or other church organization)	10
Working on the church bulletin	9
Writing letters	8
Reporting church items to newspaper	6
Singing	5
Conducting a meeting	5
Outlining the Sunday School lesson	4
Helping in a play	3
Meeting and introducing people	3
Entertaining the minister	2
Reading aloud	2
Telephoning	2
Making announcements	2
Acting as church visitor	1
Making speech of presentation (of gift)	1
Coaching a religious pageant	1
Making a booster poster	1
Arguing religion	1

LEISURE—

Writing letters	98
Conversing	96
Keeping a diary	68
Doing club work	53
Relating incidents, telling stories and jokes, etc.	29
Reading good books	25
Making calls (visiting)	17
Writing stories, poems, etc.	15
Entertaining guests	14
Telephoning	14
Reading aloud	10

	<i>Frequency of mention</i>
Helping in plays.....	4
Exchanging opinions	3
Singing	2
Meeting people	1

In compiling the foregoing list, activities which seemed to be identical were included under a single head even though different terms may have been employed in the different individual lists to designate them. For example, "discussing matters in social committee or other group" includes activities variously described as "talking over plans in committees," "group discussions," "work on social committee," "acting on social committee," "committee meetings," etc.

Fifteen items were omitted entirely because they lacked the specific detail necessary to relate them to language expression. Such items were: "doing charity work," "supervision," "home work," "holding office," "missionary work," "attending parties," "playing games," "playground work," "sports," "Y. W. C. A. work," "church organizations," "Parent-Teacher Association," "dances," "beautifying the town," and "music." However, "doing club work," which also lacks particularization and which occurred 53 times in the lists as a leisure activity, was retained because of its high frequency.

The Second Composite List.—A second composite list was made without reference to the six divisions employed in the individual lists. The first column of frequencies indicates the number of lists in which each activity was mentioned. The second column shows the total frequency of mention for each activity including duplications on each individual list. The activities in the first composite list are reduced to a total of 73 in the sec-

ond. Some of the items designated by slightly different terms under the heads "social," "civic," etc., are combined under a single unifying term in the following list. For example, "making a report to a group," with a total frequency of 34, includes "making a report before a social club," "making reports to missionary society (or other church organization)," and "making report of a church committee."

FREQUENCY TABLE OF ACTIVITIES OCCURRING IN 104 LISTS

<i>Activities</i>	<i>List Frequency</i>	<i>Total Frequency</i>
Conversing	104	371
Writing letters	104	351
Relating incidents, telling stories, etc.	88	125
Keeping a diary	68	119
Telephoning.	53	110
Engaging in group discussion.	70	97
Writing invitations and replies.	72	72
Giving talks	50	72
Keeping accounts	45	64
Writing telegrams	58	63
Giving directions	52	58
Teaching a Sunday School class.	57	57
Entertaining guests	30	56
Doing club work	53	53
Acting as secretary.	34	52
Making out reports.	34	49
Setting an example in the use of English.	40	40
Taking part in an entertainment program.	24	39
Meeting and introducing people.	34	36
Making a report to a group.	25	34
Reporting social happenings.	32	32
Keeping memoranda	24	29
Praying	29	29
Reading aloud	18	28
Making a sale or a purchase.	23	28
Giving toasts	24	26
Making calls	21	25

<i>Activities</i>	<i>List Frequency</i>	<i>Total Frequency</i>
Reading good books.....	25	25
Writing checks and receipts.....	23	24
Teaching children (at home).....	22	22
Writing news notices or other articles.....	15	18
Selecting books for home library.....	18	18
Conducting a meeting.....	10	17
Engaging in family discussions.....	17	17
Explaining business matters.....	16	16
Doing secretarial work.....	8	16
Making a motion (parliamentary practice).....	15	15
Writing a petition or a resolution.....	15	15
Writing stories, poems, etc.	15	15
Introducing a speaker.....	10	12
Writing an order	8	11
Writing an advertisement or a notice.....	10	10
Campaigning	10	10
Working on church bulletin.....	9	9
Taking dictation	8	8
Making announcements	6	8
Helping in a play.....	5	7
Planning social programs.....	7	7
Making appointments	7	7
Writing a recipe	6	6
Making a treasurer's report.....	5	6
Running a social column.....	5	5
Singing	5	5
Outlining a Sunday School lesson.....	4	4
Giving dictation	4	4
Interviewing business men.....	4	4
Gossiping	3	3
Writing an announcement.....	3	3
Writing a contract.....	2	2
Writing excuses for children.....	2	2
Getting lessons	2	2
Taking notes on speeches.....	2	2
Making an after-dinner speech.....	2	2
Reading a paper before a group.....	2	2
Acting as toastmistress.....	2	2

<i>Activities</i>	<i>List Frequency</i>	<i>Total Frequency</i>
Writing a menu for a banquet.....	I	I
Acting as librarian	I	I
Teaching immigrants English.....	I	I
Making a booster poster.....	I	I
Arguing religion	I	I
Coaching a pageant.....	I	I
Making a speech of presentation.....	I	I
Looking up information in the library.....	I	I

Nine Major Types of English Expression.—After the composite list was completed it was taken up as a topic of discussion by the one hundred and four persons who had submitted activity lists with a view to determining those composition abilities which, in the light of probable need, it seemed most desirable to possess. Related activities were thrown together under general headings and those activities were eliminated which did not, after free discussion, command a favorable consensus. By this process was evolved the final list of functional centers,⁹ or major types of English expression, which are here named and discussed.

I. LETTERS

Under this head are included all forms of direct written personal communication, such as social letters, formal notes, business letters, and telegrams. Quantitatively, letters are probably the most important written composition product of the average member of society. However, certain types of business letters, such as sales letters, letters of collection, etc., have become voca-

⁹ The term "functional centers" is used in this study to signify those major groups of expressional activities which indicate the social needs to be satisfied through English composition training and which, therefore, should dictate the character of the English curriculum. Whenever the term is used in later connections it will be understood to relate to the nine types of English expression emphasized in this chapter.

tionally specialized and may be eliminated from the subject-matter of general training.

II. CONVERSATION

On the side of oral expression, conversation is obviously the greatest single social product of language. It is probable that the ordinary curriculum of experience supplies a large part of the necessary training for effective participation in this activity, but that consideration does not affect the validity of its position in this list of major types. In addition to the activities specifically designated by the word "conversing" this division logically includes "entertaining guests," "telephoning," "making calls," and other activities mentioned in which conversation is the primary expressional element involved.

III. GROUP DISCUSSION

This is the "round table" phase of thought expression. It ordinarily differs from conversation by being prompted by more serious purpose and by being the product of a more complex social situation. This type of expressional activity implies more intensive thought, a greater restriction of range, a larger number of participants, and a much greater degree of social organization than does conversation. In these days of committees, classes, clubs, and other organized groups, it is unquestionably an important oral composition activity. It may include not only the informal type of discussion but also some of the elementary procedures of parliamentary discussion.

IV. FORMAL DISCUSSION

This is largely creative in character and takes the form of an organized presentation of one's ideas to an audience. This type

of composition may be either written or oral; i. e., a manuscript prepared for purposes of reading (or later printing) or a speech delivered without reference to a manuscript. The possible objection that public speaking is a specialized activity may be countered with the statement that the *ability* to speak before an audience is one which an educated person is *expected to possess* and which, if he does possess it, greatly increases his efficiency.¹⁰

V. REPORTS

A report differs from the preceding item (a speech or a paper) by being largely reproductive in character. A report *relays information*, whereas, in formal discussion, thought is organized into creative expression. The report appears in various forms; e. g., reporting one's observations to an individual or to a group, reporting the content of one's reading (a book review), reporting the proceedings of a meeting (minutes), etc. Some types of reports, such as business reports, may be little else than filling out blanks, the organization of the material being already determined.

VI. PERSONAL MEMORANDA

The major item under this head is diaries. Inquiry elicited the information that the majority of the students kept diaries either regularly or spasmodically. The activity occurs on 68 of the 104 lists submitted. Hence it seems proper to include it, at least as a sub-division, in this list of the more important expressional activities—even though its social value may not be immediately apparent. But if it can be demonstrated that the

¹⁰ Furthermore, the frequency table of activities on page 24 indicates that "giving talks" is a rather general performance.

recording of impressions and ideas in a private journal does, for the majority of persons, serve the purpose of clarifying thought and lending a greater degree of permanence to impressions by affording for them a form of concrete expression, then it becomes a contributory activity useful in the development of general individual proficiency in thought expression and, therefore, in a sense, "social."

Notes on study, lectures, etc., come under the head of personal memoranda, but note-taking, it seems, is restricted almost entirely to school situations. Secretaries' memoranda of proceedings from which the minutes of meetings are prepared fall in this division also.

VII. SPECIAL OCCASION TALKS

The ability to respond to a toast or to introduce a speaker may be rarely required but since it is an ability which college-trained individuals are generally expected to possess it becomes a socially desirable attainment. In the English composition objectives set forth by the National Committee on Reorganization of English,¹¹ the ability to address a public meeting is mentioned as desirable *in leaders*. Perhaps the same remark should apply to all special occasion talks. Whether the ability is a contributory cause of leadership or acquired as the result of the responsibilities of leadership, it seems certain that the academic college, one of whose boasts is "preparation for leadership," should not ignore in its curriculum those abilities which are obviously characteristic of leadership.

¹¹ Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools. U. S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 2, 1917.

VIII. DIRECTIONS, INSTRUCTIONS, AND EXPLANATIONS

The three terms used in this heading are so closely related that they easily constitute a single type of expression. The ability to give clear intelligible directions, instructions, or explanations represents one of the distinct needs in the use of language. This type of English expression occupies an important place in the conduct of business, in domestic management, and often in everyday social relationships. The activity lists indicate its presence chiefly in business and domestic affairs.

IX. STORY-TELLING

This includes the relating of incidents of any kind: stories, anecdotes, jokes, etc. Telling stories, either for instructional purposes or for mere entertainment, appeared on 68 of the individual lists of activities as an important part of home experience. It is easy to understand why women so readily see the value of the story-telling ability. Children's demands for stories force a recognition of the need. When the activity is expanded, however, to include the relating of all kinds of incidents, humorous and serious, real and imaginary, it probably becomes equally applicable to the social experience of men. It functions not only as a distinct composition product, but it is contributory to proficiency in other activities as well—for example, in conversation and in certain types of special occasion talks.

Specialized Literary Forms Are Omitted.—Special literary forms, such as poems, plays, and essays, appeared on 15 of the individual lists, and in the general discussion concerning the various items of the composite list, received strong support as a desirable element of training. The argument which seems to favor the retention of amateur literary ability as a legitimate

aim of the English composition course is the need for developing a greater appreciation of literary productions for leisure-time reading. If a more complete appreciation of art can be attained through an acquaintance with the technique or skill required in its production, then the opportunity for amateur practice of the technique becomes contributory to the realization of a worthy aim. But literary forms were excluded from the final list: (1) on the ground that the appreciation of literature is not a composition aim, (2) for the obvious reason that society does not *expect* creative literary ability even in college-trained individuals, and (3) because it is doubtful if appreciation would result from the arbitrary *imposition* of creative practice in literature regardless of personal interests and native abilities. The Committee on Reorganization very wisely inserted the modifying phrase "for those who have literary tastes or ambitions" in connection with the mention of abilities in imaginative composition as objectives of training.¹²

The Omission of Other Items.—The majority of the items on the composite list relate themselves readily to one or more of the nine major types of English expression as set forth in the preceding discussion. Those which do not do so are listed below under the respective reasons which dictate their elimination. The column at the right shows the total frequency of mention for each of the eliminated activities.

LIST OF OMITTED ACTIVITIES (Not including literary forms)		Frequency of mention
<i>Not primarily language expression:</i>		
1. Keeping accounts		64
2. Writing checks and receipts		24

¹² Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools. U. S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 2, 1917.

	<i>Frequency of mention</i>
<i>Not constructive language expression:</i>	
1. Reading aloud	28
2. Taking dictation	8
3. Singing	5
<i>Not necessarily language expression:</i>	
1. Reading good books	25
2. Selecting good books	18
3. Planning programs	7
4. Getting lessons	2
5. Looking up information at the library	1
<i>Not sufficiently particularized:¹³</i>	
1. Setting an example in the use of English	40
2. Doing club work	53
3. Taking a part in entertainment program	39
4. Making a sale or a purchase	28
5. Doing secretarial work	16
6. Campaigning	10
7. Making appointments	7
8. Acting as librarian	1
<i>Not required for general training:¹⁴</i>	
1. Praying	29
2. Writing news articles	18
3. Writing a petition or a resolution	15
4. Writing an advertisement or a notice	10
5. Working on church bulletin	9
6. Helping in a play	7
7. Running a social column	5
8. Writing a contract	2
9. Writing a menu for a banquet	1
10. Teaching immigrants English	1
11. Making a booster poster	1
12. Arguing religion	1

¹³ Items under this head are probably not irrelevant, but it is impossible to classify them properly because of their generality.

¹⁴ Most of the omissions under this head are explained by the fact of rare occurrence or the specialized nature of the activity. "Writing news articles" and "running a social column" might easily be included with "relating incidents" and "reporting happenings" under the general head of story-telling, but they are omitted on the ground that they are specialized tasks.

The aggregate frequency of mention for the eliminated activities (including literary forms) is 490. The aggregate frequency of all activities in the composite list is 2484. In other words, the nine functional centers account quantitatively for approximately eighty per cent of the English usage recorded in the individual lists.

Factors Affecting Results.—It is possible that two conditions operated in a way to affect the character of the lists of activities prepared and submitted by the students: (1) the emphasized functional viewpoint of the course, and (2) the highly organized character of the student community.

The course had been in progress for a number of weeks when the problem was assigned, and repeated references to "applied English" had no doubt accustomed the students to thinking in terms of concrete English activities. The lists, therefore, were probably more complete (and hence more valuable for the present purpose) than they would have been if they had been called for at the beginning of the course or obtained from a group of students not familiar with the functional viewpoint.

The second factor mentioned may have caused the language activities listed as "civic" to run higher than they would have run under other conditions. Every member of the student body is also a member of the Civic Association of the College which exercises control over clubs, sororities, etc., and requires reports at certain intervals from representatives of such organization. Since, however, the student community is organized with a view to introducing as many of the "leadership" activities of community life as possible, the probable addition of emphasis on civic activities should not detract from the value of the lists or affect their validity.

The Functional Centers and the Report of the National Committee.—Of the nine centers of expression established by the process of conduct analysis described in this chapter, the report of the National Committee¹⁵ includes, either by direct statement or by implication, five: (1) writing letters, (2) conversing (mentioned by the committee on oral English), (3) engaging in group discussion, (4) presenting “material already organized” (reports?), and (5) addressing an audience (limited to “those who have or hope to develop qualities of leadership”).¹⁶ This recognition by the committee of the social character of composition was an important step toward the functional adaptation of the English curriculum—an adaptation which the present inquiry is designed to further.¹⁷

The Social Distribution of Composition Activities.—The practical need for composition, as defined by the functional centers, is distributed with varying degrees of generality through the different fields of conduct. The heavily shaded squares in the following diagram represent the more obvious points of emergence of the nine expressional activities in the six fields. More specifically, each shaded square includes more than twenty per cent of the listed frequencies of a given activity. The dotted squares represent the *probable* emergence of the activity in a certain field. Approximately between ten per cent and twenty per cent of the listed frequencies fall in the dotted squares.

¹⁵ Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools. U. S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 2, 1917.

¹⁶ Also the “relating of simple incidents” is emphasized by the report (p. 54)—not, however, as an objective but as an important pupil activity.

¹⁷ In this connection, Chapter IX of the Fourth Yearbook of the Department of Superintendence (Washington, 1926) should be consulted. The chapter indicates clearly the present trend of educational thought in regard to curriculum content in composition.

	Letters	Conversa- tion	Group Discussion	Formal Discussion	Reports	Memoranda	Special Occasion Talks	Directions, etc.	Story- Telling
SOCIAL.....									
CIVIC.....									
BUSINESS.....									
DOMESTIC.....									
RELIGIOUS.....									
LEISURE.....									

For example, conversation seems to be primarily social, business, or domestic,—but it may, of course, grow out of a strictly leisure situation (which naturally merges into a social situation). The white squares contain less than ten per cent of the listed frequencies. The leisure squares should probably be dotted in the third, fourth, fifth, and seventh columns not because the lists show definite emergence of the respective activities in that field but because “doing club work” appears as a general leisure activity on 53 lists. Though it was eliminated in the final classification because it was not sufficiently particularized, it is probable that the four columns mentioned would include the important expressional phases of the activity.

The diagram merely suggests the approximate distribution of composition need as shown by the individual lists. The fields of conduct cannot be separated with precision; and experience

is not sufficiently uniform to permit a rigid classification of the activities. It was clear from an examination of the lists that the occasions of need for the different abilities shifted frequently from one field of conduct to another according to individual viewpoint or experience. The diagram, however, indicates certain general tendencies toward agreement in classification.

CHAPTER III

THE PRACTICAL EFFECT ON THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM

If, in organizing the course in composition, these expressional activities are recognized, the immediate effect will be the restriction of the subject-matter of the course to (1) principles¹ involved in the effective performance of the activities, and (2) practice in the application of the principles of effectiveness by performing the activities as frequently as needful for the cultivation of the desired abilities.

Teaching the Principles of Effectiveness.—Each individual activity possesses its own special characteristics of excellence (the discovery of which will constitute the subject-matter of a later chapter). It is important that these characteristics be made subjects of instruction. The objections of “naturalists” who believe that all learning must be “direct” learning do not apply here. Education is society’s method of economy and the school must transmit whatever principles of action have been found good—not only by affording opportunities of practice but by abstract instruction as well. To commit all training to the laboratory is a wasteful and uncertain procedure. Furthermore, at the junior college level—and at the senior high school level—a degree of development has been attained which makes it pos-

¹ This does not bar general instruction from the program. In fact, the probability that certain qualities like clearness and correctness will be found to be characteristic of *all* effective composition would seem to make some general instruction relative to those qualities desirable, but such instruction must be justified by its value in perfecting the various abilities which have been set up as objectives.

sible to teach effectively by analytical presentation much that it would be unprofitable to attempt at earlier stages.

Opportunities for Practice.—Practice, however, constitutes a generous element of all composition training. In fact it is essential to the development of any *ability to do*. But the English composition course cannot supply all the practice needs of the students without creating wholly artificial situations. Composition is not primarily a *content* subject (though it can, by socializing its methods, furnish some real and, therefore, valuable occasions for social communication). The major practice opportunities for English expression will come from *outside the course*. First, they will arise in the normal scope of extra-school experience; and still more frequently will they appear in the work of other departments of instruction, especially in the content subjects such as social science, history, biology, etc.

It is well to inject here a word to encourage the recognition of the value of extra-school practice in such activities as letter-writing—or *any* of the composition activities. Letter-writing is mentioned because it plays a greater part *out of school* than any of the other forms of written expression and probably a smaller part *in school*. Therefore, if expression is not to be inhibited by artificiality, the practice must be largely extra-school practice.

By the beginning of the college course (possibly earlier) a sense of social relationship and social responsibility that comes from a gradual introduction to the activities of adulthood is sufficiently developed to cause students to *want* to acquire those abilities which are expected of them and to want their individual performances in the use of language to be socially approved—not by narrow gang standards but by the standards of society in general. Hence there is a powerful motive for learning emanating from this intensified social consciousness. With such

a motive operating, extra-school practice becomes more valuable than classroom activity because it is ordinarily more normal.²

Practically all the writers on English method point out that the slow assimilation of English instruction or the failure to apply instruction in practice is due to pupil apathy, lack of desire, absence of motive. The direct connection of English training with social demands as here recommended opens the way for effective motivation.

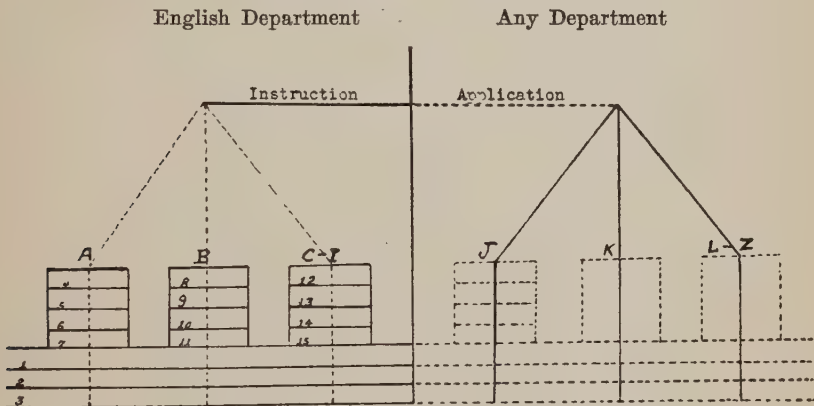
The Plan of Distributive Responsibility.—The second source of opportunity for the advantageous practice of composition activities outside the English classroom is found, as has already been stated, in the work of other departments. Since the motive for social approval does not operate so strongly here as in extra-curricular situations, it must be supplemented by teacher-approval. The responsibility for the efficient practice of the principles of good English is thus *distributed* so that it reaches into every classroom instead of into one. This is necessary not only to extend the scope of practice but also to afford real situations for composition in which the content is natural instead of artificial. In stating the point of view of the Committee on Reorganization, the writer of the report³ says: "The teacher of history may reasonably be excused from giving more than sympathetic support to the teacher of poetry, but he cannot be excused from demanding of his pupils such observance of good usage, such thinking out of intellectual problems, such organizing of bodies of ideas and such clothing of those ideas in appropriate language as the instruction of the English teacher has made possible. What the pupil learns in English he must be required to use in his other classes."

² Cf. Bobbitt: *The Curriculum* (Chapter V).

³ Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools. U. S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 2, 1917.

It is clear, then, that the acceptance of the functional viewpoint and the organization of a composition curriculum around the nine functional centers involve not only a re-definition of legitimate English subject-matter but also a complete readjustment of the relation of the English department to the rest of the curriculum.

The following diagram represents the desirable relationship between English instruction (in the English department) and English application (in all departments); or, in other words, it represents the plan of distributed responsibility for good English practice. It also indicates the restriction of the composition course to a study of those composition activities which satisfy the social demands for language expression and to the qualities of composition necessary to effectiveness.



A, B, C-I: The functional centers of composition.

1, 2, 3: Principles of effectiveness in *all* types of composition.

4-15: Special qualities of effectiveness characteristic of each of the nine activities, A, B, C, etc.

J, K, L-Z: All composition activities arising in the work of the various departments (e.g., written reports, class talks, etc.).

Undoubtedly some expressional activities will be required in the classroom which are not strictly functional in character. But whatever the occasion for language expression may be, the instructor should demand that the principles of good English usage be observed. No lapse of diligence should be allowed to occur in practice, regardless of the course in which the practice is secured.

Psychological Considerations.—The use of specific types of language response to social stimuli as a basis of instruction in composition has definite psychological advantages other than the advantage of increased motivation. First, it aids generalization by bringing to the student's attention particular instances of the application of the common principles of effectiveness in *all* the functional composition activities; and second, it trains the individual in the desired modes of reaction by setting up certain controls, or standards, in regard to the various types of English expression socially expected. That is, the simple stimulus to expression is modified and supplemented by the addition of certain intellectual recognitions, so that when the stimulus to write a letter or express an opinion in group discussion occurs in experience it is accompanied by definite knowledge controls. The great social advantage gained through such indirect control of reactions is largely in the economy of the time consumed in perfecting the reaction. Learning to use language effectively in any social situation is analogous to the adaptation of skill with tools to the processes of manufacturing different articles. Practice alone will, in time, accomplish the transfer, but the carrying over of reactions into different psychological situations can be greatly facilitated by adding to the natural stimulation accessory intellectual content. Such a cultivation of diverse possibilities of behavior is, in fact, one of the great tasks of education and

as the higher levels of training are approached mere instructional controls are used with increasing effectiveness.

The possible objection that the imposition of patterns or analytical standards to guide the performance of expressional activities is destructive to initiative and imagination is not valid. Language itself is a most flexible instrument and the organization of any new body of content for purposes of language expression involves the exercise of constructive imagination. The introduction of intellectual controls halts the natural reaction and aids the imagination in the processes of organizing, discriminating, and adjusting *prior* to behavior. Thus is diminished the possibility of loss of confidence through repeated failure or unsympathetic social criticism which is likely to throw the individual back from natural positive reactions into negative attitudes.

CHAPTER IV

ACTIVITY ANALYSIS AS A METHOD OF CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION

The Need of Particularizing.—The task of constructing an English composition curriculum is by no means complete when one has discovered those activities which should be used as the centers of instruction and practice. Obviously the curriculum should include numerous details of content selected with reference to the characteristics or qualities inherent in the most effective composition products resulting from a practice of the nine activities. And in order to facilitate the student's acquisition of ability, certain structural or technical devices which may be advantageously employed as a means of developing the desired qualities should be incorporated in the body of material to be studied.

In other words, after stating the general objective of the composition course in terms of ability to perform certain activities, it is necessary to state those qualities of excellence *which are characteristic of the most effective performance of the activities*. Not only is it necessary to give attention to such obvious standards as clearness, which is essential to *all* thought-conveying processes, but the special characteristics of each composition type must also be pointed out. For example, if the ability to write a good letter be represented by *L* and the various qualities implied in the word "good" be represented by *m, n, o, and p*, then *Lmnop* becomes a more complete statement of the objective. Now, if the devices or methods by which *m, n, o,*

and p may be controlled are presented by sub-numerals, then $L_{m_{1,2}}, n_{1,2}, o_{1,2}, p_{1,2}, \dots$ is the final symbolic statement of the particularized aims in letter-writing.

This view is emphasized by Charters in his "Curriculum Construction." He says (p. 74): "The curriculum consists of both ideals and activities on the one hand and their methods of realization and performance on the other." Those qualities or characteristics which are to serve as standards of effective performance are, in reality, the Charters "ideals" under a different terminology.

To illustrate further the necessity of refining and particularizing general objectives before prescribing subject-matter for the curriculum, one may take, for example, the ability to engage in informal discussion without discourtesy¹ and the ability to converse agreeably.² It is obvious that courtesy and agreeableness are put forth as standards of satisfactory performance. Assuming that the standards have been properly determined, one may very well ask: *How* does one show courtesy in informal discussion? What are the *ways* of being agreeable in conversation? Are there other standards than those mentioned which should be applied?

From Aim to Subject-Matter.—Answers to such questions may be obtained through activity analysis³—an analysis which should bridge the gap between accepted objectives and the

¹ Taken (in abridged form) from the Report of the National Committee on Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools.

² From Bobbitt's Los Angeles objectives ("Curriculum-Making in Los Angeles," p. 8).

³ It should be observed that the term "activity analysis" is used in this study to mean the analysis of a specific activity rather than the analysis of human activity in general. The term "conduct analysis" is preferred to designate the process of analyzing the general fields of experience into constituent activities. In other words, a distinction is made between the analysis of activity (general) and the analysis of an activity (specific).

subject-matter of teaching.⁴ Too often the bridge is merely the intuitive judgment of textbook makers or a traditional faith in the established curriculum. This lack of correspondence between course objectives (as professed) and course content (as presented) is merely the result of a natural conservatism and not an indication of static condition. Recently published courses of study and recent textbooks show that *some* modifications are being made. Such changes are always gradual. And until scientific methods of curriculum study can be perfected and applied to the different fields of instruction, educational conservatism is probably a necessary safeguard against erratic judgment and excessive enthusiasm.

Three Phases of Activity Analysis.—Activity analysis may be directed toward three distinct aspects of an activity: (1) the performance itself (e. g., the selling of goods as accomplished by expert salesmen), (2) a product of the performance (e. g., a successful selling talk), and (3) the difficulties encountered by those who are learning the job.

The complete analysis of an activity or its correlative product goes further than the determination of standards: it points out devices of attainment as well. Its aim is to discover not only qualities but also methods.

The difficulty analysis establishes the zone of emphasis. It marks the point at which the curriculum of normal experience outside the school has failed to provide adequate training. It may also supplement the other two phases of activity analysis by directing attention (through contrast) to certain elements of expert performance which might otherwise escape notice.

⁴ Charters says: "While writers on the curriculum have begun with the statement of aim, none has been able to derive a curriculum logically from his statement of aim. In every case he has made an arbitrary leap from the *aim* to the *subject-matter*, without presenting steps which irresistibly lead us from aim to selection of material." (Charters: Curriculum Construction, p. 6).

The Methods of Activity Analysis.—Charters⁵ mentions four methods of making a job analysis⁶: (1) introspection, (2) interviewing, (3) working on the job, and (4) questionnaire. It seems that a fifth method should be added; viz., *careful observation*, or *inspection*. Especially if one includes the analysis of the *product* of performance as a legitimate phase of activity analysis, such a method becomes important. For example, in the field of English it may be found desirable to analyze by close examination, or *observation*, effective composition *products* in order to discover the qualities which should be used as standards of performance. If the product to be analyzed has been pronounced effective by a large number of capable judges, this method (like interviewing) has the advantage of supplementing individual observation by competent consensus.

Refinement of Analysis.—Because of the fact that an activity may be modified by attending circumstances and conditioning factors, it is probable that no single analysis will be exhaustive enough to cover every occasion of performance. A *complete* analysis would take into consideration all possible modifications of the activity, but for practical purposes it may be assumed that the normal conditions of performance are sufficiently similar to warrant conclusions on the basis of a single general analysis. If, however, more exhaustive data are required for effective instruction in the performance of the activity, the results of the original analysis may be refined by making supplementary analyses of sub-types of the activity.⁷

⁵ Charters: *Curriculum Construction*, p. 38.

⁶ The term "job analysis" has been popularized in the vocations where the analysis of particular activities, duties, positions, or jobs was used as a device in employment offices to assist in fitting the man to the job.

⁷ For example, social letter-writing and business letter-writing are types of a general activity. Analyses of these two types are reported in Chapters V

Frequent Analyses Desirable.—If activity analysis is to be properly used as an instrument for guiding curriculum adaptations, the process must be repeated frequently enough to insure its dependability. Repeated analyses are desirable not only because they produce additional refinements and act as checks on the correctness of former work but also because *activities change*. An analytical study of bookkeeping ten years ago would not be considered an adequate basis for the organization of a modern course in accounting. Some activities, however, like the composition activities, are relatively constant in character—though radical changes in the conditions of society undoubtedly do modify them to some extent. It is often asserted, for example, that modern conditions of life have destroyed the real art of letter-writing. Of a color with this contention is the frequently expressed belief that all modern art (especially poetry and painting) is decadent. It is possible, however, that “decadence” will prove to be simply a derogatory term for “change.”

But regardless of whether or not the general quality of thought expression (in any of its various forms) improves or deteriorates, the school continually faces new problems in the teaching of composition because of *fluctuation in difficulty*. The types of difficulties that call for attack will vary with individuals, groups, and localities. Hence the repetition of that phase of analysis dealing especially with difficulties is extremely valuable as an instructional device.

and VI. Still further refinement could be secured by selecting out such subtypes as letters of congratulation and letters of collection. And these in turn offer possibilities of further classification on the basis of occasion or conditioning circumstances. The extent to which such refinement should be carried will depend upon the demands of *general training*. It is not desirable to carry the analysis into the field of specialized performance in order to secure material for the curriculum of general training, or to obscure standards of general accomplishment by the analytical treatment of comparatively rare occasions of an activity.

Activity Analysis and Letter-Writing.—Chapters V, VI, and VII are devoted to illustrating activity analysis in English composition. Letter-writing was selected as the subject of the analytical study, since the letter is the commonest form of written expression employed in the activities of a normal life.

The ability to write a good letter may be accepted as a valid objective. But a consciousness of the objective is not enough. The successful teaching of letter-writing depends not only upon a desire to teach it but also upon a proper selection of the subject-matter. *What shall be taught about letters?* Textbooks in composition and rhetoric devote approximately six per cent of their pages to letter-writing, but practically all the emphasis is laid on *forms* of business correspondence and formal notes.

The following analysis of letter-writing represents a necessary step in the process of constructing an effective composition curriculum. It illustrates the method of particularizing general objectives. It answers the questions "What" and "How?" It bridges the gap between aims of teaching and content of teaching. It discovers desirable curricular material and prepares the way for the effective organization of subject-matter to be used in the course in composition. In other words, it demonstrates the value of activity analysis as a method of curriculum construction.

CHAPTER V

LETTER-WRITING: ACTIVITY ANALYSIS ILLUSTRATED

In the preceding chapter the method of activity analysis has been proposed as an effective means of particularizing general objectives and discovering characteristics of high grade performance of composition activities. It is the purpose of this chapter and of the two succeeding chapters to illustrate the practicability of the method and demonstrate its value.

What Is a Good Letter?—Some individual opinions have been hazarded and certain desirable characteristics have been set down in casual and isolated references. But, in general, letter-writing as an art has not been seriously studied with a view to teaching it in the schools.

This is partly explainable by the fact that a general skepticism prevails, or has prevailed, concerning the possibility of discovering a "technique of letter-writing" which can be adapted to instruction. "Personality is the secret of a good letter" has been the aphoristic declaration with which any proposal to teach letter-writing has been met. And the statement has been generally accepted as a comfortable solution of what otherwise would be a new English problem. But the art of letter-writing, like other arts, should be subject to effectual and helpful analysis. It is true that it is more intimate, so far as individual relationships are concerned, than painting or poetry; and, for that reason, the contention that it becomes the special vehicle of personality seems to have some logical basis. As a matter of fact, however, personality is as great a factor in public performance

as in private. The personality of Keats pervades "Endymion" as thoroughly as it does his letters. Moreover, to say that letter-writers, public speakers, conversationalists, salesmen, or even poets and musicians, are "born and not made" is begging the question. A careful study of any activity will prove itself fruitful through the discovery of common characteristics of excellence as well as certain effective devices employed by experts in the performance of the activity.

The present study was undertaken with a view to establishing by objective methods dependable standards for the teaching of letter-writing to college students.

What the Textbooks Offer.—Composition texts disclosed only occasional references to content characteristics of the letter. Such terms as *clear, courteous, sincere, unstudied, vivid, full of life, and agreeable* were used to characterize good letter style. Save for these brief and somewhat incidental records of an author's individual opinion, little help for the student of letter-writing is to be found in texts except in the details of form and grammatical correctness. To the subject of letter-form the textbooks give adequate treatment.

The following data are derived from an examination of forty textbooks in composition and rhetoric. All sections devoted to letter-writing were carefully studied and all characteristics of content which were recommended as desirable in social letters¹ were listed. The length of the list and the low frequencies of mention indicate a rather wide spread of opinion.

LIST OF CHARACTERISTICS MENTIONED IN TEXTBOOKS

	<i>Frequency of mention</i>
Adapted to recipient's mood or interest.....	16
Interesting to the reader.....	14

¹ A special study of business letters is reported in the next chapter.

	<i>Frequency of mention</i>
Courteous	13
Clear	10
Like a talk with a friend.	7
Full of narrative material.	6
Entertaining	5
Well organized	5
Expressive of attitudes and opinions.	5
Informal	4
Careful	4
Vivid	4
Chatty	4
Sincere	4
Intimate	4
Agreeable	4
Free from apologies	4
Definite	3
Varied in content	3
Unified	3
Spontaneous	3
Full of personal experience.	3
Brief	2
Humorous	2
Direct	2
Full of descriptive detail.	2
Full of life	2
Full of news	2
Emphatic	2
Forceful	2
Full of information.	2
Original	2
Elegant	2
Characterized by good diction.	2
Gossipy about the writer.	2
Not gossipy about the writer.	2
Unrestrained	2
Free from stilted or trite expressions.	2
Expressive of sentiment.	2
Not impulsive	1

	<i>Frequency of mention</i>
Adapted to the occasion.....	I
Full of human interest.....	I
More formal than conversation.....	I
Expository	I
Simple	I
Picturesque	I
Expressive of writer's interest.....	I
Unrestricted in length.....	I
Unconventional	I
Familiar	I
Colloquial	I
Unstudied	I
Imaginative	I
Natural and unaffected.....	I
Appropriate in tone.....	I
Frank	I
Cordial	I

It is obvious that this list, while it may be suggestive, represents such diversity of judgment that it cannot of itself serve as a dependable criterion for instruction in letter-writing. An analytical objective study is needed in order to discover the dictates of efficient practice. Such a study is presented in the following analyses of groups of letters.²

Materials of the Study.—The principal materials³ of this study consist of:

Group I—Letters contributed by women of recognized ability and leadership throughout the country⁴—150 letters.

Group II—Modern collections of literary letters—296 letters.

Group III—Sample business letters submitted by presidents and managers of business and educational institutions—50 letters.

² In this study the second and third phases of activity analysis as defined on page 48 are emphasized; viz., the analysis of the *product of the activity* and the analysis of *difficulty*.

Group IV—Letters from young women of approximately college freshman standing³—1000 letters.

The analysis of the first group of letters revealed the prevalence of certain major characteristics. The analysis of the literary letters of the second group lent validity to the findings of the first analysis by discovering substantially the same characteristics as those found in the letters of Group I—in addition to certain other occasional characteristics and many niceties of literary style not frequently exhibited in the letters of the first group. The analysis of the third group supplemented the study by differentiating the business letter from the social letter. The analysis of Group IV discovered certain general weaknesses of student letters on the side of content and also established the “mechanical” needs of college students so far as letter-composition is concerned.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD LETTERS AS DETERMINED BY AN ANALYSIS OF GROUP I

In reading the letters, the characteristics were set down as they were observed. No ready-made list was used by which to check the quality of the individual letters.

Characteristics Not Constant.—It is not to be supposed that all the characteristics discussed in the following sections were found in every letter which was examined, but the frequency with

³ Chapters devoted to letter-writing in more than fifty textbooks were utilized as auxiliary material.

⁴ These were current letters from the private correspondence files of well-known women. The letters were contributed as samples of “good” letters. They were very kindly offered in response to requests for coöperation and were of invaluable assistance in the study.

⁵ Two hundred and fifty of the letters of Group IV were social letters obtained through the confidential coöperation of the freshman English students at Stephens College. Seven hundred and fifty were business letters obtained from the College office.

which they recurred justifies setting them down as significant dominant *qualities of the social letter in general*. Since different occasions may call for different characteristics, no attempt should be made to prescribe a rigid application of these characteristics without adequate consideration of the occasion which calls the letter forth. Activity analysis in its most exhaustive form would call for a complete classification of letter occasions with a consequent study of each occasion. But it is believed that there is a sufficiently large common element in the conditioning circumstances of letter-writing as it functions in the experience of the average person to render a single general analysis productive of dependable and helpful results.

A count was taken on six characteristics in a sample of fifty letters from Group I and the following frequencies were computed:

FREQUENCIES OF SIX CHARACTERISTICS IN FIFTY LETTERS

(1) Courtesy	30 ⁶
(2) Informality	32
(3) Humor	23
(4) Expression of opinions or attitudes	35
(5) Tone of cheerfulness, or optimism	27
(6) Few centers of organization (i. e., restriction of subject-matter)	34

Following is the tabulation chart on which the foregoing table of frequencies is based.⁷

⁶ The absence of such a characteristic as courtesy in a letter does not necessarily mean the presence of its opposite.

⁷ For the interpretation of the figure in parentheses at the left of the chart refer to the preceding table of frequencies. The numbers across the top of the chart from 1 to 50 refer to individual letters.

TABULATION CHART ON SAMPLE OF FIFTY LETTERS

Letter Number:		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
(1)	*					*	*	*	*		*		*			*	*		*		*	*	*			*	*	
(2)	*	*	*	*					*	*	*	*			*	*		*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*
(3)		*		*	*		*			*		*			*		*	*	*		*				*	*		*
(4)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*	*		*		*
(5)	*		*		*	*	*	*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*		*		*	*	*					*
(6)		*			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*			*		*	*	*	*	*	*

Letter Number:		28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	TOTAL	
(1)		*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*		*	*	*		*	*		*	*	*	*			30	
(2)		*			*	*			*		*		*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	32	
(3)		*	*		*	*			*		*		*	*			*		*			*			23	
(4)		*		*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*		*		*	*	*	*	*	35	
(5)		*		*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*		*	*	*		*		*	27	
(6)		*		*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	34	

Clearness.—Since the quality of clearness was present to a satisfactory degree in all the letters, it was omitted from the preceding tabulation chart. It has already been intimated that clearness is considered requisite to all thought-conveying processes. It is the one characteristic which may be confidently assumed as valid since it is inherent in the nature of the activity itself. Thought is *conveyed* only to the degree that it is *clearly expressed*. No noticeable instances of obscure meaning appeared in any of the letters which were submitted. Certain allusions which were not wholly intelligible to a third person could not be listed as instances of actual obscurity since they probably referred

to experiences or incidents familiar to the recipient of the letter and were, therefore, entirely clear to him.

The following paragraphs are devoted to an explanation of the major characteristics revealed by the analysis. A short discussion of each characteristic is given.

Courtesy.—In intimate or friendly letters this amounts to much more than formal politeness. It implies thoughtfulness, solicitude, consideration for others, a well-bred deference to the epistolary rights and personal interests of the individual to whom the letter is directed. Some of the devices, or ways, by which that attitude of mind which is here described as courtesy may be expressed in a letter are:⁸

1. Give due attention to questions which have been asked.
2. Never fail to express expected congratulations.
3. Never fail to acknowledge obligations. Show a sense of gratitude.
4. Express good wishes.
5. Make inquiry about matters which you know are of first importance and interest to the recipient of the letter.
6. Recount personal details or incidents in the light of what you know of the recipient's interests.
7. Apologize if there is any occasion for it.
8. Express or imply respect, esteem, or affection.
9. Adapt style and subject-matter to age and probable interests of the reader (e. g., letters to children).
10. Adapt tone and subject-matter to circumstances and occasions.⁹

⁸ All the devices listed were utilized in the letters which were read—not all of them, of course, in any one letter. No quantitative record was kept of devices employed as “carriers” of the various qualities mentioned. Any device by which a desirable characteristic might be emphasized was considered important irrespective of whether it occurred frequently or infrequently in the letters.

⁹ Since the circumstances dictating the writing of the letter were not always made clear by the letter itself, it was not possible to determine to what extent this tone of appropriateness was characteristic of letters; but since adaptation to the occasion involves also a consideration of the reader's feelings and interests, it very properly belongs in the list of ways by which the quality of courtesy may be emphasized.

Informality.—One naturally expects informality in social letters. But it requires a nice sense of discretion to be informal without being “cheap,” to be familiar without being inelegant. “An odd leaf of a volume, and that volume your friend,” says Thoreau in characterizing one of his own letters. But that odd leaf should bear the unaffected scrawls and pencilings, the sly smiles and whimsicalities, characteristic of one’s *natural* self. This does not mean that conventionality has no place in letter-writing. It may, in fact, assert itself frequently without destroying certain pleasing touches of informality which characterize occasional sentences or paragraphs. Perhaps this element of informality had better be called a “flavor” rather than a style of composition characteristic of the whole letter.

Certain interesting ways of being informal were observed:

1. Use of colloquialisms, or conversational expressions.³⁰
2. Use of invented expressions.
3. Use of pen sketches and illustrations.
4. Elimination of over-formal headings and conclusions.
5. Use of figures of speech humorously exaggerated.
6. Use of light, playful, or familiar tone.
7. Narration of commonplace details.

Humor.—This characteristic is possibly allied to informality. But it is sufficiently evident in the letters studied to justify its being listed as a separate characteristic. The familiar letter affords an excellent channel for humorous expression. If one may judge by its prevalence in the letters studied, humor is evidently an important condiment of letter-writing. Its use, apparently, is not restricted to the letters of the professional humorist—whose entire letter may billow with laughs—but it is freely and

³⁰ It should be remarked in this connection that while colloquialisms were frequently employed they were governed by a regard for good taste. There was a certain verbal restraint which preserved the elegance of the diction.

liberally used (often in letters of serious purpose) by Lamb, Stevenson, Moody,¹¹ and practically all writers of pleasing letters.¹²

Following are some of the sources from which letter-writers draw their humor:

1. They smile sympathetically at the weaknesses of human nature.
2. They depict absurd situations.
3. They exaggerate—intentionally.
4. They juxtapose apparently unrelated thoughts.
5. They make reference to amusing experiences.
6. They narrate humorous incidents.
7. They indulge in plays upon words.

Expression of Opinions, Attitudes, and Feelings.—The letters of Group I were characterized by frequent expressions of opinions, attitudes, and feelings. In one of his letters, Bayard Taylor apologizes because his letter contains so little besides news. He felt, apparently, that mere “newsiness” weakens a letter. And Christina Rossetti says: “News is not my forte.” Even in those letters (like George Meredith’s) which seem to be especially “newsy,” the thing that gives life to the letter is the *running comment*—the expression or implication of attitude. A suggestive and illustrative passage from Meredith’s letters may be cited here. In telling of a tramp across the hills with some of his eminent friends, he writes: “They are men of distinction in science and literature. Tramping with them, one has the world under review as well as pretty scenery.” While it is not necessary for one to have “the world under review” in the letters he writes, it is desirable that he show an intelligent re-

¹¹ This statement anticipates the study of the literary letters which is reported later in the chapter.

¹² Most of the instances of humor recorded seemed to be of a conservative type. They were expressions of humor under control—not chattering echoes of boisterous, unrestrained, shallow, irresponsible minds.

sponsiveness to that small part of it which has come under his observation. The best letters (it would appear from this study) are likely not to be descriptive¹³ or mainly narrative, but they will challenge the interest by an exposition of attitude or a casual interpolation of opinion relative to matters that concern (either directly or indirectly) one or both parties to the correspondence.¹⁴ Opinionative letters are intellectual reactions toward life. A letter which is merely "newsy" may be only a bulletin of events.

It is not to be thought, however, that the "newsy" letter is taboo. To convey news—well-sorted news—is one of the motives of correspondence. But ordinary news should be considered simply as subject-matter in the rough. It may be refined by proper organization, by opinionative comment, by humor, etc. But without embellishment it becomes the dry rot of social letter-writing.

A Tone of Cheerfulness, or Optimism.—It has been remarked that the letter is a vehicle of "fugitive moods."¹⁵ It is a verbal chameleon against the changing hues of human temperament. The noticeable prevalence of optimism in the letters which were analyzed for the purposes of this study may be ascribed to the fact that cheerfulness is naturally the dominant mood of the normal mind. A few of the letters, however, were distinctly dispirited. While there is, apparently, a place for the letter ex-

¹³ Very little description was found in the letters studied. This may be due to the fact that description is a very difficult form of discourse for most people to use clearly and effectively. Or it may be due to a feeling on the part of the writers that too much description "clogs a letter" (as Wordsworth says).

¹⁴ It is well, however, to keep in mind Mr. Clarke's caution (Clarke, Thomas Arkle: "When You Write a Letter"); viz., that a letter should not be a philosophical essay.

¹⁵ Dawson, W. J. and C. W.: "The Great English Letter-Writers." Vol. 1, p. 31.

pressive of various moods, it may be set down as a safe conclusion that a courteous consideration of the feelings of the reader allows only a rare indulgence in despondency. The appropriateness of the mood may depend upon the *truth* of the mood. But assuming that cheerfulness is the true mood of normal life, one expects it to find a large place in the friendly letter. At all events, the significant fact remains that a cheerful outlook on experience characterized the majority of the letters of Group I—letters which were selected by competent critics as marking high standards of correspondence.

Few Centers of Organization.—Another conclusion reached through an examination of the letters is that good letters show remarkably few instances of loose organization. The amateur's letter may be a miscellaneous collection of sentences and paragraphs—a faithful record of disconnected facts. But the best practicers of the art favor the "linear" letter—the letter which confines itself to few and closely unified subjects of thought. It is conceivable that a "gossipy" letter may often be of interest to a correspondent, but in such instances the choice bits become merely the illustrative and coherent development of the general theme of "gossip." Matters entirely foreign to the main theme of a letter may be left for a later communication, or thrown into a postscript, or treated in a very subordinate or incidental manner. The point is that the dominant theme of the letter should not be swamped with a flood of incoherent details. In choosing his subject-matter the writer must practice the virtue of restraint.

Two Secondary Characteristics.—*Restraint* and the *narration of experiences* are secondary characteristics derived from the major characteristics already mentioned. The term "restraint" is used to signify a pleasing tone of reserve noticeable especially in connection with certain aspects of informality,

humor, and the restriction of subject-matter. Very few of the letters of Group I were principally narrative, but the relating of incidents was noted frequently in connection with major characteristics as an accompaniment or an auxiliary device. Properly subordinated to larger purposes, the narration of experience becomes a helpful constituent element of letter-content.

The Matter of Form.—Apparently there are almost as many variations of good form in letter-writing as there are good letter-writers.¹⁶

In the replies of the women through whose assistance this study was made possible, twenty variations in form were noted in heading, salutation, and address. Some of these variations will be pointed out in connection with the supplementary study of the business letter.

One woman very well known in the field of modern literature writes that many "scrappy notes" and "illegible scrawls" which

¹⁶ The most common form employed in the friendly letter is herewith illustrated:

Columbia, Missouri,
September 22, 1922.

Dear Anna:

When I heard that you had won the prize offered by.....

.....
.....
.....

Cordially yours,
Mary K.

The heading, complimentary close, and salutation were found to change with the degree of intimacy or familiarity. The following salutations are arranged in what appeared to be the ascending order of formality: *My dear Anna*, *Dear Anna*, *Dear Miss Malvern*, *My dear Miss Malvern*. In very intimate letters, strikingly informal salutations are often found, such as nicknames, initials, etc. The complimentary close may also become less conventional, such expressions as *With love*, *Ever yours*, *Affectionately*, etc., being employed. Even in the more formal letter the conventions are much more plastic than one would imagine.

she has received from certain contemporary celebrities and which entirely ignore the matter of form are among the best letters she has received. She defines a good letter as "any letter which promotes correspondence between people." This is a thoroughly tenable attitude. It emphasizes letter-content rather than letter-form, for the content of a letter is a greater factor in promoting correspondence than is the matter of form.¹⁷

However, the laws of form (including punctuation, capitalization, spelling, legibility, neatness, paragraphing, proper headings, etc.) are important and they must be taught. For the world at large is not so generous in its tolerance of "scrappy notes" and "illegible scrawls" as the woman, just referred to, who treasures them among her correspondence keepsakes. A fair conformity to such laws is to a letter what conventional manners are to a gentleman—a non-essential of character but an index of good breeding.

ANALYSIS OF LITERARY LETTERS¹⁸

In order to supplement the foregoing study, four collections of published letters were analyzed.¹⁹ Each letter was read care-

¹⁷ The factors of content and form are not conflicting factors but mutually supplementing factors. They probably cannot be accurately evaluated. It is important not to neglect either factor.

¹⁸ Group II. See page 56.

¹⁹ The four collections which were used were:

Cook and Benham: *Specimen Letters*. Boston, Ginn and Co., 1905.

Fuess: *Selected English Letters*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1914.

Greenlaw: *Familiar Letters*. Chicago, Scott Foresman and Co., 1915.

Anderson: *English Letters*. London and New York, Longmans, 1916.

A total of 296 letters were analyzed. Letters which occurred in more than one collection were used only once. The following authors were represented in the 296 letters:

John Adams, Joseph Addison, Lucy Aikin, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Matthew Arnold, Jane Austen, Francis Bacon, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Anne Barnard, Charlotte Bronte, Phillips Brooks, John Brown, Robert Browning, Edmund Burke, Frances Burney, Robert Burns, Lord Byron, Jane Welsh Car-

fully and characteristics were set down as they were observed. The list of qualities discovered by the analysis of the letters of Group I was kept in mind during the study of the letters of Group II, but additional characteristics were also recorded whenever their presence was sufficiently evident to warrant positive assertion.

The analysis of literary letters is not as dependable a method of securing data for practical instruction in letter-writing as the analysis of such letters as those contained in Group I of this study. Too many factors other than the factor of excellence may influence the selection of a literary letter for publication; e. g., its biographical importance or the fame of its writer or recipient. However, the degree of support which the findings from Group II lend to the findings from Group I renders the analysis of the literary letters valuable as a supplementary study.

Characteristics Found in Group II.—Following is a list of characteristics which show frequencies greater than 1 :

lyle, Thomas Carlyle, Lewis Carroll, The Earl of Chesterfield, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Collingwood, William Cowper, Oliver Cromwell, Charles Dickens, Lady Duff-Gordon, Charles W. Eliot, Maria Edgeworth, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Lady Fanshawe, Edward Fitzgerald, Benjamin Franklin, Oliver Goldsmith, Thomas Gray, Arthur Hallam, Alexander Hamilton, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Lafcadio Hearn, Benjamin Robert Haydon, Ebenezer Hoar, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Thomas Hood, James Howell, Leigh Hunt, Thomas Huxley, Washington Irving, Lord Jeffrey, Samuel Johnson, John Keats, Charles Kingsley, Charles Lamb, Charles Godfrey Leland, Abraham Lincoln, David Livingstone, H. W. Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, Thomas Macaulay, James Madison, Lady Mary W. Montagu, Lady Morgan, William Vaughn Moody, Sir Thomas More, Sir Charles Napier, Sir William Napier, Horatio Nelson, Amelia Opie, Dorothy Osborne, William Paston, Jr., Mrs. Penruddock, Alexander Pope, F. W. Robertson, Samuel Rogers, John Ruskin, Sir Walter Scott, Madame de Sévigné, Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Shenstone, Sir Henry Sidney, Sydney Smith, Robert Southey, Ellen G. Starr, Richard Steele, John Sterling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jonathan Swift, Mary Taylor, Alfred Tennyson, William Makepeace Thackeray, Henry David Thoreau, Henry van Dyke, Horace Walpole, George Washington, The Duke of Wellington, Mrs. Susanna Wesley, John G. Whittier, and James Wolfe.

Frequency of
occurrence

COURTESY ²⁰	173
RESTRICTION OF SUBJECT-MATTER	153
INFORMALITY	123
HUMOR	114
EXPRESSION OF OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES	90
Personal details	44
Narration of incidents	41
Descriptive sketches ²¹	40
Discursiveness	33
TONE OF CHEERFULNESS, OR OPTIMISM	31
A high degree of fluency (or rhythmic quality)	21
Special adaptation to the reader	21
Tone of restraint ²²	20
Directness	20
Striking diction	15
Dignity and formality	14
Aspersive, accusing, complaining, vindictive, scornful, or indignant tone	14
Trivial details	13
Extreme brevity	11
Wordiness (tiresome prolixity)	10
Vividness ²³	9
Expressions of admonition	8

²⁰ The six items capitalized are major characteristics established by the first study (Group I). *Clearness* was omitted from the tabulation. The nature and purpose of language expression demands that it be clear in order to be effective. Unusually clear portrayal of ideas is noted under the head of vividness.

²¹ The per cent of letters whose main purpose seemed to be to narrate or to describe was greater in literary letters than in letters of Group I. However, this may be due to the basis of selection employed by the editors of the collections. In the Anderson collection the narrative and descriptive elements were especially prominent.

²² The low frequency of this characteristic does not mean that there was *lack of restraint* in all the other letters. A characteristic was set down only when it was positively and unmistakably evident. By such a method the *out-standing* characteristics may be more reliably determined than by applying a negative standard and listing qualities as present simply because they are not noticeably absent.

²³ The instances of vividness occur in narrative and descriptive letters.

	<i>Frequency of occurrence</i>
Special adaptation to occasion.....	7
Chattiness	6
Explanatory discussion	5
Sadness	5
Poetic imagination	4
Tone of depression, gloominess, or resignation.....	4
Life and enthusiasm	4
Abruptness of style.....	3
Tactfulness of expression.....	2

Many of the items of the foregoing list classify readily as aids to the major characteristics. For example, the chief value of the use of personal details in a letter may be to emphasize the familiar, informal tone; the narration of an incident may be the vehicle of humor; and adaptation to the reader is one of the manifestations of courtesy as it was defined in the preceding analysis.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS

From the results of the foregoing analyses, it appears that the major characteristics of good *social letters in general* are: courtesy; informality; humor; the expression of opinions, feelings, or attitudes; a tone of cheerfulness, or optimism; a restricted scope of subject-matter (i. e., few centers of organization); and clearness. Because of their close association with these major qualities, *restraint* and the *relation of incident* may be added as secondary derived qualities which merit consideration.

In addition to these characteristics of content, the study of the first group of letters included the matter of form and pointed out the importance of observing correct usages in regard to mechanical detail.

The findings of the analysis are significant as guides to curricular content. Sufficient particularization has been accomplished to facilitate the determination of proper activities and experiences to be included in a course of instruction designed to improve ability in letter-writing.

CHAPTER VI

LETTER-WRITING: ACTIVITY ANALYSIS CONTINUED

Inasmuch as the preceding study deals largely with the social letter, a supplementary analysis was made in order to discover those general characteristics of business letter-writing which should serve as standards of performance. The material analyzed consisted of fifty effective business letters¹ (Group III²) submitted by persons of competent judgment and high attainment in various fields of business—in addition to the replies of those persons whose coöperation was solicited in the collection of material for both the social letter analysis and the business letter analysis.³

Are Academic Standards Valid?—The president of a well-known business firm, in response to a request for assistance in this study, wrote: "A good business letter to-day rarely complies with academic prescriptions." Other collaborators pointed out that the letters which they submitted as models of effective correspondence might not survive a rigid schoolroom test in all respects.

A study of the sections devoted to business letters in fifteen books on business English and in eleven general composition

¹ Special types of business letters were ignored in this study, the object being to discover characteristics of *business letters in general*. Furthermore, the highly specialized forms of business correspondence have no place in a composition course organized with a view to satisfying general needs.

² See page 56.

³ Correspondence analysis has already been applied by certain business firms as a means of improving the letters which go out in the name of the company. This is done on the theory that every letter is a sales letter: It sells either goods or good will. Sherman Perry's article, "How We Cement Friendships by Our Everyday Letters," (in *System*, December, 1922,) is an account of the use of letter analysis by a commercial firm in the preparation of instructional material for its stenographers and dictators.

texts indicates that *the lack of adequate and consistent academic prescription* is a more nearly just charge against the textbook treatment of letter-writing than *academic nonconformity to best business practice*.

Following are the suggestions in regard to the attributes of a good business letter which were found in the textbooks:⁴

LIST OF CHARACTERISTICS MENTIONED IN TEXTBOOKS

A business letter should be:	Frequency of Mention		Total
	In 15 Books on Business English	In 11 General Composition Texts	
Clear.....	9	9	18
Courteous.....	6	8	14
Brief.....	5	4	9
Free from threadbare phrases.....	5	2	7
Adapted to reader's viewpoint.....	6	1	7
Characterized by forceful beginning.....	5	0	5
Orderly (or well-planned).....	4	1	5
Direct.....	2	3	5
Concise.....	4	0	4
Complete.....	3	1	4
Tactful.....	3	1	4
Unified.....	2	0	2
Coherent.....	2	0	2
Optimistic.....	2	0	2
Forceful.....	2	0	2
Characterized by forceful ending.....	2	0	2
Honest.....	2	0	2
Sincere (unaffected).....	2	0	2
Restricted to one topic.....	1	1	2
Exact in regard to facts.....	1	1	2
Emphatic.....	1	0	1
Friendly in tone.....	1	0	1
Restrained.....	1	0	1
Frank.....	1	0	1
Characterized by the "You-attitude".....	1	0	1
Definite.....	0	1	1
Formal.....	0	1	1
Simple.....	0	1	1
Dictated by common sense.....	0	1	1

⁴ Matters of form were more adequately and consistently treated in the texts than characteristics of content. However, directions in regard to letter-form were liberal enough to admit most of the variations in practice recorded later in this chapter. The list of suggested attributes which is here presented relates to *content* values rather than *formal* values.

It will be interesting to note which of the attributes in the foregoing list survive the test of the following objective study and emerge as dominant characteristics of good business letters.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD BUSINESS LETTERS AS DETERMINED BY AN ANALYSIS OF GROUP III

The results of the analysis indicate the presence of the following major characteristics in the letters. The degree of prevalence of each characteristic is expressed in per cent. These characteristics were listed in the manner which has already been described in connection with the social-letter study.⁵

Clearness	100%	Brevity	52%
Courtesy	68%	One Purpose	88%
The "You" Interest	52%	Good Organization	60%
Originality of Phrase	44%	Informality	38%
Directness	72%	Neatness	78%
Formal Correctness		90%	

Clearness.—As in the study of the social letter, it was assumed that the nature and purpose of language demanded clearness as the first essential characteristic of its use. Since no instances of obscure meaning were noted, the validity of the assumption is borne out by a 100% prevalence of the quality of clearness in the fifty letters examined.

*Courtesy.*⁶—Courtesy quite naturally attaches itself (as an "ideal") to all forms of social intercommunication. It is not surprising, therefore, to find it evident in the sample business letters which were submitted or to find it mentioned frequently in the textbooks as a desirable quality of the business letter.⁷

⁵ See page 56.

⁶ A letter which simply succeeded is not being discourteous was not classified as courteous.

⁷ The courtesy devices employed in business letters were found to be very similar to those used in social letters. It was stated by one person who assisted in the study (an American diplomatic representative) that one mark of thoughtful consideration on the part of business letter-writers is the including of informational details which are likely to be of service to the reader, even though such details may not have been specifically requested.

The "You" Interest.—This, at first thought, seems to be a phase of courtesy—and it *does* contribute to the courteous tone of a letter. But even if it is nothing more than a device of courtesy it is sufficiently important in business correspondence to deserve separate treatment. It is fundamental in the psychology of salesmanship (and, in one sense, all business letters are sales letters) to center the reader's attention on *his own interests*. For example, a business letter emphasizing "I's" and "we's" and "my's" and "our's" is less likely to hold the attention than one which tactfully emphasizes "you" and "your." This characteristic is more, however, than a matter of phraseology. In fact the excessive use of the second personal pronoun may lend an air of insincerity and affectation to a letter. It is a matter of *focusing the thought* on those things which most immediately concern the person to whom the letter is addressed.

Originality of Phrase.—The tendency to standardize the initial and concluding phrases of business letters is so strong that fewer than fifty per cent of the letters examined entirely avoided such expressions as "In reply, etc." and "Trusting (or hoping) that . . . etc., I am" Even though the majority of the letters contained stock expressions, "originality of phrase" is included here as a characteristic of excellence, for, in many cases, striking freshness and fluency of diction was exhibited in the *body* of the letter even when the introductory and concluding sentences were trite and conventional—and invariably the forcefulness of the letter was traceable to some other quality than conformity to standard phases.

Directness.—To come without delay to the business of the letter is especially desirable in business correspondence. One may feel disposed to dally in reading a social letter, but in business one expects the point quickly. A dilatory beginning, con-

taining long, involved sentences full of unimportant detail, is an unwarranted imposition on the reader's time. Approximately three-fourths of the letters stated the writer's purpose clearly and without unnecessary wordiness in the first sentence.

Brevity.—This characteristic was not so prevalent as many of the others (but the occasions of some of the letters justified a more detailed exposition). Business men who replied to inquiries concerning letters mentioned brevity as a desirable characteristic more often than any other quality.

One Purpose.—In business letters the subject-matter is usually restricted to one central theme. If there are other matters to be communicated which cannot well be related to the main point of the letter, they probably merit separate treatment. If such matters are of secondary importance, they may be disposed of in a postscript.⁸ The restriction to a single theme or purpose is facilitated by the specific nature of the occasions of letter-writing.

Good Organization.—Although a letter should have only one main purpose, there may be a number of ideas to be presented in accomplishing the purpose. Relating these ideas to one another in the most effective form is the task of organization. A well-organized letter is a chain of connected links—not scattered, disjointed ideas. Some of the schemes of organization (or "linking") which appeared in the sample letters were:

1. State the main point and attach supporting units in ascending (or descending) order of forcefulness.
2. Begin with an argument, veiled in an analogy which stimulates curiosity, and proceed to a proposition.
3. Paragraph each supporting idea though it may be expressed in a single sentence.

⁸ Cautions against the use of the postscript may be found in textbooks, but it is noticeably prevalent in actual letter-writing practice.

4. Secure logical progression from one paragraph to the next by use of thought connectives (or, in case of enumerated points, use paragraph numbers).
5. Use some guiding principle of organization (like reader's needs, social or material satisfaction, etc.).

Informality.—It is a mistake to think that all business letters are formal. More than one-third of the letters examined revealed instances of informality—with a resulting emphasis on the *personal tone* of the letter. The informal effect was produced usually by lapsing into colloquial phraseology or by using humorous allusions and analogies.

Neatness.—This quality ranks high in business letters. Presumably there is a certain commercial value in a letter which is aesthetically pleasing. To name the elements of neatness involves a further analysis. Briefly, the things which seemed to contribute most to the pleasing appearance of the letters examined were:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Proper margins. | 5. Uniformity of style (para- |
| 2. Clear and uniform legibility. | graphing, spacing, etc.). |
| 3. Proper spacing. | 6. Good, clean paper. |
| 4. Proper position on page. | |

The meaning of "proper" in the foregoing list is, of course, determined by the laws of aesthetic proportion and arrangement.

Formal Correctness.—While it is desirable to get away from the use of standard expressions (as the paragraph on "Originality of Phrase" points out), the mechanical form of the letter should comply with one of the standard practices. Occasionally a letter may adopt a novel style of heading in order to emphasize its individuality or to attract attention. This is probably not objectionable if the style which is adopted is in keeping with the principles of good taste. But ordinarily a letter should be

"individualized" through its *content*, for the thought element is essentially the plastic element of a letter.⁹

Ninety per cent of the letters were entirely free from violations of the laws of formal correctness.¹⁰ A comparison of the social letters and the business letters indicate a much greater degree of formal perfection in the latter than in the former. While attention to form should not supersede attention to content (as it so often does in textbook treatments), correctness must be admitted as a highly desirable quality in all correspondence.

⁹ The most common letter form is herewith illustrated:

Columbia, Missouri,
March 19, 1926.

Mr. John Clayton,
930 Glenolga Place,
Webster Groves, Missouri.

Dear Mr. Clayton:

You will receive this week.....
.....
.....

If you approve
.....
.....

Very truly yours,

There are, however, many permissible variations from this form; e. g., end punctuation may be omitted in heading and address; successive indentations may be used in writing the address; the address may stand at the end of the letter instead of at the beginning; abbreviations may be used for states, streets, etc. (though it should be noted that the majority of the letters examined avoided such abbreviations); salutations and conclusions may vary according to the degree of formality desired; the block system may be used (requiring no paragraph indentation); the paragraph margin may be even with the colon after the salutation; etc.

¹⁰ Under "formal correctness" were included all matters of mechanics such as spelling, punctuation, etc. Hence the "90%" indicates a significant freedom from error.

CHAPTER VII

STUDENT DIFFICULTY IN LETTER-WRITING: ACTIVITY ANALYSIS CONTINUED

The study of student difficulty in letter-writing is based upon a careful examination of a thousand student letters—the letters of Group IV.¹

Two hundred and fifty of the letters were social letters written by students of approximately college freshman standing. Seven hundred and fifty were business letters written by high school seniors who were considering entering college. The analysis was conducted with a view to discovering the prevailing weaknesses in the letter-writing of those students who were ready for the college course in English. Two things were observed in the study: (1) the weaknesses of content; i. e., the failure of the writers to employ interest devices or methods found to be characteristic of good letters,² and (2) the amount of formal error in the letters.

In Regard to Content: Social Letters.—When the two hundred and fifty social letters were examined from the standpoint of content and general style, six obvious weaknesses appeared. In each case the characteristics of excellence established by the previous analyses³ were used as guides to judgment.⁴

¹See page 56.

²See Chapters V and VI.

³See Chapters V and VI.

⁴Before enumerating the major weaknesses, it will be well to note two minor points in regard to courtesy and optimism. While there were few noticeable instances of *discourtesy* recognizable, a large number of the letters *seemed* to lack that thoughtful consideration for the reader which was so obvious in the letters of Group I. A too frequent focusing on self (quite natural in

1. Crudeness in letter-writing is the miscarriage of informality. The use of a slangy phrase that offends the sense of propriety, the continuous use of beheaded sentences, the excessive use of nicknames and familiar epithets, the hilarious and unrestrained treatment of personal experience, and over-indulgence in the "emotional superlative," may spring from a misdirected attempt to achieve informality in letter-writing—and there can be no doubt that informality is the result—but it is an informality not pleasing to a discriminating mind. *This is the first notable weakness of student letters.* Evidently the cure lies in the development of good taste, a sense of fitness, and in the careful study and application of the common devices of informality used by good letter-writers.

2. Inferior humor, usually somewhat boisterous, was evident in most of the student letters in which humor was attempted. The two most prevalent humor devices employed were: (1) interpolated laughter, and (2) the comedy of "tragic" occurrences such as the failure of recipes or of attempts to foil the teacher. Many of these instances really contained humor possibilities which were ruined in the telling. Interpolated laughter is, of course, inane and intolerable (though a few rare instances of it can be found in literary letters which are otherwise unobjectionable). The improvement of the quality of humor employed in student composition can be accomplished through more definite attention to the subject of humor. A sense of humor needs educational direction as much as the capacity for musical appreciation.

youth) seemed to exclude a consciousness of the interests of the "other person" or leave them at best only a peripheral margin of attention. Of optimism there was no lack. The objection, if any, would be the seeming perversion of a healthful cheerfulness into an unballasted hilarity—a superlative gush—innocent of all adequate consideration of fact and circumstances.

3. Few opinions, other than exclamatory outbursts indicating approval or disapproval, were found in the student letters. Actual count showed fewer than ten per cent of them to be opinionative. They were primarily "newsy," a complete gossip repertory, a catalogue of "she did's" and "we went's."

4. Lack of organization about central themes was another prominent weakness of the student letters. Instead of few centers of organization, there were many. The tendency to "tell everything" is probably a natural juvenile trait, since everything in one's experience is invested with a certain interest; but it is contrary to the best practice as found in the letters of Groups I and II. The value of *dominant themes* in letters should be stressed.

5. Lack of restraint has already been implied in connection with the foregoing criticisms of student letters. Restraint is evidently closely associated with other qualities mentioned. Hence it is not surprising to find the lack of restraint chiefly evident in the failure to exhibit effectively such characteristics as informality, humor, etc. A glance through the preceding paragraphs will discover certain expressions which very well define what is meant by lack of restraint: "unballasted hilarity," "the emotional superlative," "inferior humor . . . somewhat boisterous," "exclamatory outbursts," and "the tendency to 'tell everything.'"

6. Violations of good form (as here treated) include poor paragraphing and improper headings and conclusions. Approximately one-half the errors in form were errors in paragraphing. In listing improper headings and conclusions a wide latitude of usage was allowed. Strictly speaking, the matter of form should not be included in this list of weaknesses, since it is *not* a matter of content. But since paragraphing is so intimately related to

the manipulation of the content and is determined directly by the nature and organization of the subject-matter, it is included here even at the risk of seeming illogical.

In Regard to Content: Business Letters.—When the seven hundred and fifty business letters were read with a view to discovering the points at which student accomplishment falls noticeably below standards set by the foregoing analysis,⁵ five principal weaknesses were found:

1. Little evidence of the student's recognition of the importance of the "other person" in the correspondence.
2. An abundance of stock expressions.
3. Little or no evidence of an attempt to organize⁶ ideas.
4. Lack of clearness usually resulting from poor organization or complicated sentences.
5. Unpleasing appearance of letters due to untidiness, poor writing, and general lack of neatness.⁷
6. Violations of good form.⁸

In Regard to Formal Error.—The categories of error used in the tabulations (see Tables I and II on pages 81, 82) are practically the same as those established by a previous study.⁹ The ease with which the errors lend themselves to this classification

⁵ See Chapter VI.

⁶ About twenty per cent of the letters were simple direct requests for certain information and therefore required no organization other than the construction of a single sentence. The reference to a lack of clear, forceful organization is applicable to the longer letters in which it was necessary to present a number of related ideas (e. g., an explanation of the student's preparation and a statement of expectations regarding further training).

⁷ It will be pointed out later in this chapter that the business letters written by students exhibited much greater carelessness than the social letters in matters of neatness, handwriting, letter-form, stationery, etc. The situation is exactly reversed in the letters of Groups I and III. The greater informality of the social letter apparently carries with it greater license, while in the commercial field stricter standards of accuracy have been demanded of the letter-writer.

⁸ The remarks on violations of good form on the preceding page apply here also.

⁹ See *The School Review* 25:555 ff. October, 1917.

is the chief argument for the adoption of the categories. It also facilitates the comparison of results when such comparison is desirable.

Tables I and II show the error-types arranged in decreasing order of prevalence. Table I omits 106 unclassified errors, and Table II omits 62 unclassified errors. An examination of the tables will reveal the following facts: (1) errors in punctuation constitute 45 per cent of the total error; (2) the frequency of error in the business letters is approximately twice as great as in the social letters; (3) the category of error showing the greatest difference in rank in the two sets of material is "adjectives and adverbs."

The unusually large amount of punctuation error is partly explained by the determinative nature of the subject-matter. Letter-headings, containing abbreviations, offer tempting opportunities for careless punctuation.¹⁰

TABLE I. THE RELATIVE PREVALENCE OF ERROR IN 250 SOCIAL LETTERS WITH A TOTAL OF 90,530 WORDS

Error-Types	Number of Errors	Rank
I. Punctuation.....	889	1
II. Sentence Structure.....	517	2
III. Spelling.....	308	3
IV. Adjectives and Adverbs.....	269	4
V. Letter Form.....	223	5
VI. Capitalization.....	131	6
VII. Diction.....	97	7
VIII. Apostrophe.....	88	8
IX. Careless Writing.....	61	9
X. Verbs.....	59	10
XI. Prepositions and Conjunctions.....	47	11
XII. Case.....	25	12
XIII. Pronouns (not case).....	22	13
XIV. Quotation Marks.....	9	14
Total.....	2,745	

¹⁰ A wide latitude of usage was allowed in punctuation and letter form.

TABLE II. THE RELATIVE PREVALENCE OF ERROR IN 750 BUSINESS LETTERS WITH A TOTAL OF 60,610 WORDS

Error-Types	Number of Errors	Rank
Punctuation.....	2,242	1
Letter Form.....	402	2
Capitalization.....	273	3
Sentence Structure.....	263	4
Spelling.....	242	5
Verbs.....	222	6
Apostrophe.....	80	7
Diction.....	56	8
Careless Writing.....	53	9
Prepositions and Conjunctions.....	47	10
Adjectives and Adverbs.....	28	11
Quotation Marks.....	10	12
Pronouns (not case).....	9	13
Case.....	7	14
Total.....	3,934	

A possible explanation of the greater frequency of error in the business letters lies in the fact that there was a greater degree of selection in the social letters. Nearly all the business letters were written by girls who had not yet entered college—many of them, in all probability, did not continue their training further than the completion of the high school—whereas the great majority of the social letters were written by students who had already entered upon their college course. Therefore, if the transition from school to college is automatically a selective process, *some* decrease in the frequency of error would be expected. The excessive amount of error in the business letters may also indicate a tendency toward carelessness in the composition of that type of letter. Such a conclusion could be supported by the fact that handwriting was much poorer in the business letters than in the social letters and that little attention was paid to the general neatness of the letter or to the kinds of stationery or writing materials used.

The colloquial nature of the social letter probably accounts for the drop in rank from *fourth* in Table I to *eleventh* in Table II of erroneous usages of adjectives and adverbs. "I sure want you to write" and "We had a real nice time" are expressions more likely to be called out in social correspondence than in formal business letters where there is less occasion for adverbial and adjectival emphasis.

In order to test the reliability of the data and determine the degree of general diffusion of error throughout the letters (i. e., regular recurrence of error-types) the social letters were divided into groups of approximately 18,000 words each and the frequency of error in each group was tabulated:

TABLE III. TABLE OF ERROR FREQUENCIES IN SMALLER GROUPS OF LETTERS
(Roman numerals indicate corresponding error-types listed in Table I)

Error-Types	Group 1: 18,010 words— 50 letters	Group 2: 18,405 words— 50 letters	Group 3: 17,974 words— 55 letters	Group 4: 18,166 words— 40 letters	Group 5: 17,965 words— 55 letters	Total
I.....	185	187	200	127	190	889
II.....	105	125	94	86	107	517
III.....	61	84	52	45	66	308
IV.....	18	46	45	82	78	269
V.....	47	53	53	19	51	223
VI.....	31	41	25	20	14	131
VII.....	29	15	32	1	20	97
VIII.....	20	7	29	7	25	88
IX.....	16	2	28	4	11	61
X.....	9	14	12	6	18	59
XI.....	12	15	8	4	8	47
XII.....	2	6	5	3	9	25
XIII.....	7	6	5	0	4	22
XIV.....	6	3	0	0	0	9
Total.....	548	604	588	404	601	20745

A table of ranks was then prepared (Table IV) showing the degree of constancy with which the error-types persist throughout the five samples:

TABLE IV. RANK OF ERROR-TYPES IN 90,000 WORDS AND IN FIVE DIVISIONAL SAMPLES

Error-Types (from Table 1)	Rank in 90,000 words	Rank in five divisional samples				
		1	2	3	4	5
I.....	1	1	1	1	1	1
II.....	2	2	2	2	2	2
III.....	3	3	3	4	4	4
IV.....	4	8	5	5	3	3
V.....	5	4	4	3	6	5
VI.....	6	5	6	9	5	9
VII.....	7	6	7	6	12	7
VIII.....	8	7	10	7	7	6
IX.....	9	9	14	8	9	10
X.....	10	11	9	10	8	8
XI.....	11	10	8	11	10	12
XII.....	12	14	11	12	11	11
XIII.....	13	12	12	13	13	13
XIV.....	14	13	13	14	14	14

By applying the formula for rank correlation to the data contained in Table IV, correlation coefficients were obtained as shown in Table V.

TABLE V. CORRELATION OF RANKS OF ERROR-TYPES IN 90,000 WORDS WITH RANKS IN FIVE DIVISIONAL SAMPLES OF 18,000 WORDS EACH

Samples	Correlation
1	0.94
2	0.90
3	0.96
4	0.92
5	0.95

From Tables IV and V it appears to be a justifiable conclusion that the different types of composition error distribute themselves in approximately the same manner in small bodies of written material (about 50-pupil samples) as in large bodies of ma-

terial (250-pupil samples). This establishes the reliability of the data so far as mechanical error is concerned and indicates the possibility of reducing the tabulation labor involved in other composition studies of similar nature by basing judgments on the results obtained from smaller bodies of material.

A SUMMARY OF THE LETTER-WRITING ANALYSIS

There may be other characteristics of a good letter than those which have been pointed out in this study, but the importance of the study lies in the fact that it establishes (by careful analysis rather than by unsupported opinions or guesses) certain definite objectives to be used in the teaching of letter-writing. It also records various devices or means which successful letter-writers have used in introducing desirable qualities into their letters. The third phase of the analysis, dealing with the faults of student letters, lends new confirmation to the belief that emphasis upon mechanical correctness is a primary need in student composition. The study also points out the weaknesses of student letters on the *content* side, thus establishing a basis for the selection of curricular subject-matter and indicating the lines of needed emphasis.

This study in no way minimizes the element of personality in letter-writing. In accepting the characteristics of excellence which the study establishes and attempting to adapt them to instruction, one is not "reducing personality to mathematics." There must be a technique of every art, and letter-writing is no exception.

Having particularized the objectives of letter-writing, one naturally seeks the means of attainment. There arises, then, the need of a body of subject-matter, based on the results of the present study or of similar studies and organized for use in

the course in composition. Not only is such a procedure possible in letter-writing, but it is possible also to study every other unit of functional composition and to determine scientifically the nature of the subject-matter necessary to the development of proficiency in the specific task to be mastered.

CONCLUSION

Projected Studies.—The possibility of practical application of the method of activity analysis to the English curriculum problem has been illustrated. In order to complete the preliminary analyses necessary to a proper selection and organization of content for the complete curriculum in English expression, the remaining functional centers¹ are to be studied in the same manner. The methods of analysis will necessarily vary somewhat according to the nature of the activity to be studied. Obviously the approach to the study of conversation or personal memoranda may be different from that which has been described in connection with the study of letter-writing. But the general methods of analysis² will be applied to each activity with whatever selection or modification may be necessary in each individual case.

Using the Results.—It has already been stated that the results of this study are being applied to the revision of the English curriculum in at least one college. As rapidly as each unit of the study is completed, the content of the English course is modified in whatever direction the results of the study dictate. For example, the data obtained from the analyses reported in Chapters V, VI, and VII have been employed in developing a course in letter-writing which forms an important part of the composition training in the college. As the organization of each functional unit of the course is completed, it should be subjected to the test of practice and improved by such additions or changes

¹ See Chapter II.

² Five methods of analysis are named on page 49.

as appear needful for the fuller development of the desired abilities. Modifications may also result from refinements of data secured through repeated analyses designed to give greater particularization to the activities to be performed or to the standards of satisfactory performance.

While this technique of curriculum revision was developed with a view to its practical application in a particular college, essentially the same method is applicable to conditions in high schools and in other colleges—in fact, on all levels of training. The list of activities presented by the present study may be somewhat modified by further investigations, and it may be found desirable to omit certain special leadership activities from the curriculum of general training (especially for some ability groups) at sub-college levels; but the functional basis of instruction should remain the same and the analytical methods of determining the content of instruction should be utilized as fully as practicable in all situations.

General Summary.—This discussion has set forth the problem of the composition curriculum as it appears in the light of the principle of pupil need and the social aims of general training. It has particularized the problem by determining, through the process of conduct analysis, nine functional centers of English expression. It has pointed out the logical readjustment in general composition training which must follow the acceptance of the functional viewpoint. Through a content analysis of a large number of textbooks reported in the Appendix it has shown that comparatively little subject-matter can be found in current composition texts which is directly applicable to instruction in a completely functionalized course. It has insisted upon activity analysis as an effective method of determining appropriate details of content for the curriculum and, by an objective

study of letter-writing, it has illustrated the possibility of the scientific application of the method of analysis to those composition activities which constitute the range of expressional needs. In a word, it has endeavored to present a technique for curriculum construction in the field of English expression and to demonstrate its practicability. The study has been conducted not only with the expectation that the results would be of immediate value in the selection of content for a particular course of study but also with the hope that the methods which have been followed would mark out more clearly the road that lies ahead—a road which may not be traversed in a day but which by slow progress leads to the goal of scientific curriculum reconstruction.

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APPENDIX

TENDENCIES IN TEXTBOOK MAKING

In order to discover (1) the extent to which the functional centers of expression are recognized in the composition textbooks, (2) the relative emphasis given to other types of content, and (3) the tendencies toward increase or decrease in emphasis, the subject-matter of forty-three English composition texts was analyzed and classified. Fourteen of the texts were published before 1916; seventeen were published from 1916 to 1919 inclusive; and twelve were published after 1919.

Categories of Content.—The final categories used in the classification of subject-matter were established by inspection, trial classification, modification, and re-classification.¹ They are:

1. *Forms of Discourse.*—This includes narration, exposition, etc.

2. *Units of Composition.*—This includes all material on words, sentences, and paragraphs.

3. *Grammar and Mechanics.*—This includes both functional

¹ Tables of contents and indexes were examined in order to discover the most commonly recurring headings or topics. With these in mind, one of the books was selected at random and a trial classification was made. The selection proved to be an unfortunate one because the lesson plan of organization was followed and the tentative categories apparently did not "fit" the plan of the book. However, a second book was tried and better results were secured. As additional analyses were attempted it was found necessary to add a number of new divisions and sub-divisions until more than thirty different headings were being used. By the time the subject-matter of six books had been classified it was apparent that the classification scheme had been sufficiently modified to accommodate the text materials. When the data for each of the 43 books had been recorded, the sub-classes of subject-matter were thrown together according to the laws of natural relationship to form the ten categories here described.

and formal grammar. It also covers work in punctuation, capitalization, spelling,² etc.

4. *Functional English Activities*.—This division includes letter-writing, making reports, and other activities listed in Chapter II of this study.

5. *General Principles*.—This division includes the subjects of unity, coherence, emphasis, clearness, etc.

6. *Literary Forms and Figures*.—This includes treatments of the essay, the novel, forms of poetry, etc., and chapters on figures of speech.

7. *Special Preparation, Study, and Recitation*.—This division includes instructions on how to prepare themes (oral or written), how to study, how to take notes, how to recite, etc.

8. *Outlines*.—Many of the pages devoted to the making of outlines were classified also under "Unity" or "Coherence" or "Preparation of Themes," but occasionally there were sections on outlines which could not well be subordinated to any other topic.

9. *Suggestions*.—This division includes all suggestions to the teacher regarding methods of procedure and all lists of suggested theme topics.

10. *Parliamentary Law*.—The amount of material found under this division is almost negligible, as will be seen by reference to Table I.

This plan of classification was found to be satisfactorily applicable to more than 90% of the material in 18,500 pages with less than 7% of overlapping treatment of topics necessitating double classification.³ The unclassified material, which totaled

² Some chapters on spelling were found to be devoted almost wholly to a study of suffixes, prefixes, and etymological word groups, and were, therefore, classified under "words" in Number 2.

³ The smallest unit of material separately classified was a half page. The seven per cent of double classification is a measure of the lack of mutual exclusiveness of the divisions. The greatest overlapping occurred in divisions 7 and 8.

1734 pages, included: general discussions of style, chapters on literary criticism, penmanship exercises, memory exercises, supplementary reading lists, etc.

The Six Major Categories.—It is evident, from Table I, that the first six categories constitute the major divisions of content. Together they include approximately 93% of the total number of pages. Chart I (made from Table I) gives a graphic quantitative comparison of the six major categories.

The Data Considered Chronologically.—Thus far the data are significant only inasmuch as they express a gross comparative emphasis on different types of content. To discover tendencies of decrease or increase it is necessary to take into account the periods to which the texts belong. Table II shows the data arranged according to chronological periods: (1) before 1916, (2) from 1916 to 1919 inclusive, and (3) after 1919. Only the six major categories (or 93% of the material) appear in the table. The percent columns furnish the index of emphasis for each type of subject-matter. Chart II represents the comparative emphasis graphically. Chart III is also based on Table II and shows increase and decrease in emphasis on the six major types of subject-matter during the three periods.

TABLE I. DISTRIBUTION OF 16,766 PAGES OF MATERIAL (IN 43 TEXTS) IN TEN CATEGORIES ARRANGED ACCORDING TO RANK

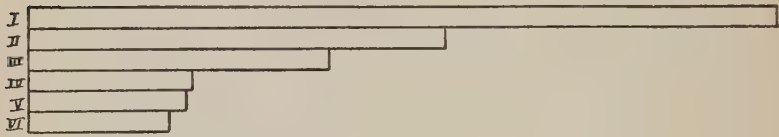
CATEGORIES	Pages	Percent
Forms of Discourse.....	5029.5	30
Units of Composition.....	3494	20.8
Grammar and Mechanics.....	2957	17
Functional English Activities.....	1634	9.7
General Principles.....	1414	8.4
Literary Forms and Figures.....	976.5	5.8
Preparation, Study and Recitation.....	659	3.9
Outlines.....	326	1.9
Suggestions.....	232	1.4
Parliamentary Law.....	44	.3

CHART I. A QUANTITATIVE COMPARISON OF THE SIX MAJOR CATEGORIES OF CONTENT IN 43 ENGLISH COMPOSITION TEXTBOOKS

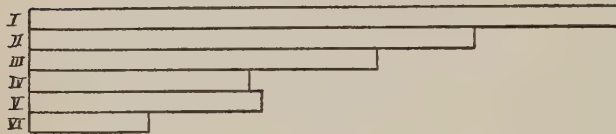


CHART II. COMPARATIVE PREVALENCE OF SIX TYPES OF SUBJECT-MATTER IN COMPOSITION TEXTS OF 3 PERIODS
(Roman Numerals Refer to Categories in Chart I)

Before 1916



1916-1919 Inclusive



After 1919

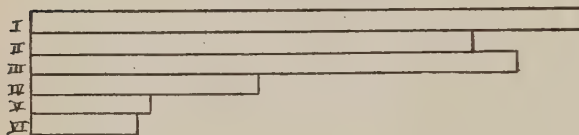
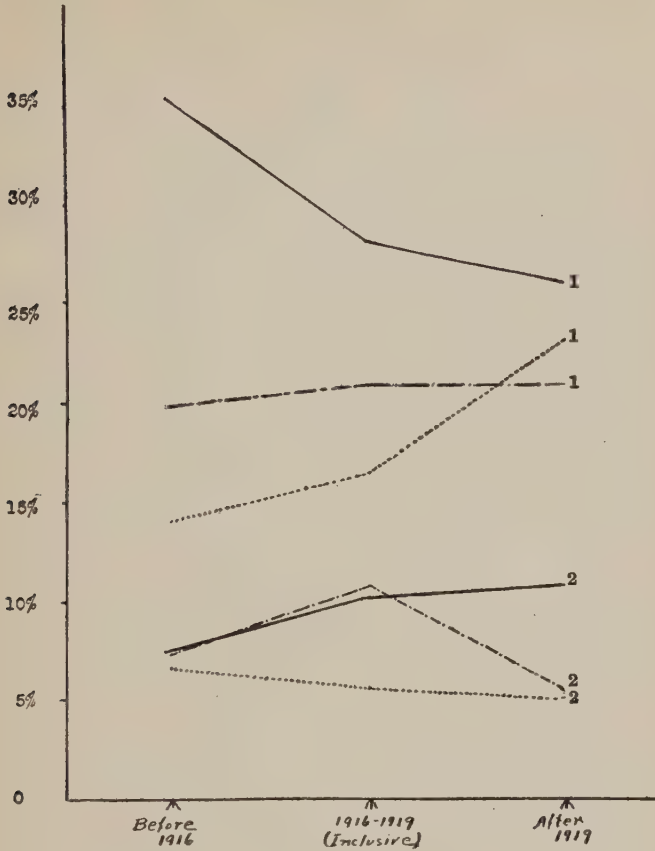


CHART III. SHOWING INCREASE AND DECREASE IN EMPHASIS ON THE SIX MAJOR CATEGORIES THROUGH 3 PERIODS



- 1— Forms of Discourse.
 1- - - Units of Composition.
 1..... Grammar & Mechanics.
 2— Functional Activities.
 2- - - General Principles.
 2..... Literary Forms & Figures.

TABLE II. DISTRIBUTION OF SUBJECT-MATTER IN COMPOSITION
TEXTS OF THREE PERIODS
(Only the six major categories are used)

CATEGORIES	Before 1916		1916-1919		After 1919	
	Pages	%	Pages	%	Pages	%
Forms of Discourse.....	1803	35.5-	2004	28.2	1222.5	26.6+
Units of Composition.....	1011.5	19.9+	1515	21 +	967.5	21 +
Grammar and Mechanics....	721	14.2-	1174	16.5+	1062	23.1+
Functional Activities.....	390	7.7-	748.5	10.5-	495.5	10.8
General Principles.....	384.5	7.5-	779	11 -	250.5	5.6
Literary Forms and Figures .	340	6.7-	405	5.7	231.5	5

The Place of Letter-Writing and Other Functional English Activities.—Among the functional English activities by far the most common topic of treatment was found to be letter-writing. In the forty-three texts examined, more than two pages were devoted to letter-writing for every page devoted to other functional English tasks. Of the 16,766 pages of classified material, 6.6% were given to letters—including all forms of direct written communication such as social letters, formal notes, business letters, telegrams, etc. To other practical composition activities (oral or written) slightly over three per cent of the pages were given. Since Chart III shows a very perceptible increase in emphasis on the functional activities, it will be interesting to note whether the increase is to be explained by the gradual introduction of *more* such activities into the subject-matter of the texts or by the extension of the letter-writing chapters.

From the data it appears that other functional centers than letter-writing have claimed the attention of textbook makers—especially since 1916. Chart IV shows the comparative amounts of material on letter-writing and on other functional English activities (1) in all texts examined, (2) in texts before 1916,

(3) in texts from 1916 to 1919 inclusive, and (4) in texts after 1919.

Conclusions.—This analysis of composition textbook material reveals certain significant facts:

(1) Two-thirds of all material in the texts may be classified under three heads: Forms of Discourse, Units of Composition, and Grammar and Mechanics.

(2) Thirty per cent of all the material may be classified under one head: Forms of Discourse.

(3) Functional English activities constitute only 9.7% of all the material—letter-writing (including all forms of direct written communication) constituting approximately 7%.

(4) There is a marked tendency toward decrease in emphasis on the four forms of discourse and an equally evident tendency toward *increase* in emphasis on correct form as expressed through grammar and mechanics.

(5) A gradual elimination from composition texts of the study of literary forms is indicated.

(6) The per cent of space devoted to letter-writing represents a fairly constant ratio through the three periods, but the attention given to other functional activities has more than doubled.

While the study shows clearly that the English composition texts are still colored by the traditional attitude, it also indicates that the traditional attitude is yielding before newer conceptions of the English composition problem. That the importance of accuracy is recognized is evident by the rise in the curve of grammatical and mechanical content; and the gradual application of the functional hypothesis to composition training is indicated by

the increased prominence of those practical activities in the performance of which language abilities are directly employed.

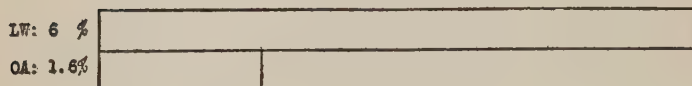
But these tendencies must not obscure the fact that the emphasis is, as yet, by no means rationally adjusted. Even the

CHART IV. COMPARISON OF SPACE DEVOTED TO LETTER-WRITING AND TO ALL OTHER FUNCTIONAL ENGLISH ACTIVITIES

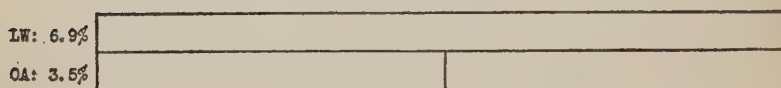
(1) In all Textbooks Examined.



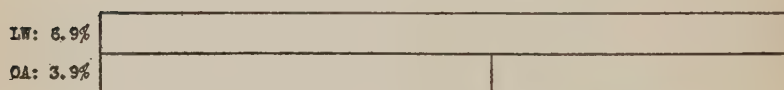
(2) In Texts Before 1916.



(3) In Texts from 1916 to 1919 Inclusive.



(4) In Texts After 1919.



LW = Letter-Writing; OA = Other Functional Activities

more recent texts devote 26.6% of their pages to description, argumentation, etc., and only 10.8% to the functional centers

of expression. It is a long step from the current composition textbook to a thoroughly functionalized English curriculum.

NOTE: The detailed tabular data on the 43 textbooks examined are omitted for obvious reasons. The purpose of this phase of the study was to investigate a *general condition*, not to advertise the qualities of particular books.

It should be added also that many textbooks which do not give a large amount of space to letter-writing, conversation, group discussion, etc., are nevertheless valuable for purposes of general instruction in certain common basic qualities of good English. (See, in this connection, the note on page 40.) But while all the texts may serve their respective purposes, only a few of them offer a functional approach to the subject. A completely functionalized curriculum in English expression will not be achieved until the textual content of instruction includes, in addition to the basic principles of usage, a treatment of those activities which constitute the normal occasions for practice.

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